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WHAT PIERRE DID WITH HIS SOUL

Soul of Pierre

ROBINS * * * * OHNET

WHAT PIERRE DID WITH HIS SOUL

[FROM THE FRENCH OF GEORGES OHNET]

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WHAT PIERRE DID WITH HIS SOUL.

I.

DOCTOR DAVIDOFF turned his harsh and weather-beaten features toward Prince Patrizzi's guests with an air of inspiration, and contributed these surprising words to the discussion:

"And do you people believe that a suggestion many times repeated has power to implant in your brain an idea that will pierce it with the penetrativeness and persistency of a gimlet? Do you believe that this idea can so influence your spiritual being as to modify your physical condition?—for I suppose that you will admit that mind rules matter absolutely and positively?"

"Yes, we admit it," the Neapolitan calmly answered. "Now, and this is the very point that I want you to answer, the conclusion must be. . . ."

To this reply, which gave promise of an exhaustive argument upon the proposition laid down by the Russian doctor, there succeeded an instant of stupefied silence among the gay spendthrifts and complaisant women who had been dining in the parlor of the Hôtel de Paris, on the terrace of Monte Carlo. Looks of astonishment and disgust were exchanged about the luxuriously spread

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table, upon which the flowers were dying of suffocation amid the heat of the lamps and the smoke of cigarettes; then suddenly a storm of exclamations and invective arose from these devotees of fashion, in indignant protest at being torn from the customary inanity of their conversation and set down in the midst of a dry desert of scientific discussion.

"We've had enough physiology!"

"We're here to drink, smoke, and laugh!"

"This isn't a dissecting-room, it's a private dining-room!"

"The doctor be hanged! He's *paf!*"

"Please listen, gentlemen; it is very interesting."

"You are boring these ladies to death!"

"Open the window; it stinks of science in here!"

"Oh dear! I wish I was at the Casino! . . . I dreamed the red came out thirteen times."

"That's an idea that the *croupier* palmed off on you."

"Will you have a dance?"

"Oh, oh! Laura, sit down on the piano!"

"Well, well, children, go wherever you choose, only let us have peace."

"Don't ask us to stay! No! There would be no use in trying to keep us!"

"You are a polite set!"

Three or four women and five or six young men arose tumultuously, and called upon the head-waiter to bring their wraps, which that functionary did with much bustle. Patrizzi kept his seat, smiling on the pretty women, who shook out their skirts and smoothed down their waists with coquettish airs. He shook hands carelessly with his guests, and said:

"Let every one do as he pleases. Go along; we will be with you in an hour." Then turning to Pierre Laurier the artist, his friend Jacques de Vignes, and Doctor Davidoff, who had kept their places: "Go on, my dear

fellow," he said to the physician; "you interest me immensely."

The Russian threw away his cigarette, lighted another one, and looking upon his three listeners with an air of authority, went on with the tale that had been cut short by the interruptions of the guests who had now departed.

"I confess that the story which I was beginning to tell our friends is quite a strange one, and that it is a little wanting in probability to those who are of a sceptical turn; but in our dark and foggy Slavonian land, which seems to be really the proper abode of ghosts and phantoms, it would not have elicited the first word of incredulity. Half of our compatriots are Swedenborgians without being aware of it, who admit the phenomena of the invisible world in company with the great philosopher, but without reasoning upon them; and you might affirm in their presence, as I now do before you, the astounding fact of the transmission of a soul into a living body merely by an exertion of the will on the part of a person who has made up his mind to die, and you would see them tremble and grow pale, but not utter a word of protest. In our country people believe that there are vampires who come forth from their grave when a ray of moonlight falls upon the stone; they believe in apparitions that reveal to one his approaching end. And so, just by the very fact that credence is given to these miracles, they are rendered possible of accomplishment. A powerful conviction is the most penetrating of fluids, and absolute confidence is the first condition demanded by spiritualism. If you doubt, its adepts will say to you, do not attempt to fathom our mysteries; they will remain absolutely sealed to you. The world of the invisible is revealed only to those who have an ardent longing for knowledge of it; to the mocker and the incredulous it will remain forever a closed book."

Jacques de Vignes was here attacked by a painful fit of coughing, which turned his fine features quite pale; he

regained his breath with difficulty, and turning toward the doctor, as if animated by some secret hope:

"And you say that you witnessed the occurrence," said he in a choking voice; "you saw the young girl come back to life, regain health and strength, as if all her fiancé's vitality had passed into her being?"

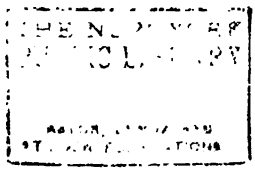
"I am not discussing the materiality of the fact," Davidoff replied, "I am simply giving you its psychological consequence. Vladimir Alexievitch, seeing Maria Fedorowna, whom he loved devotedly, dying by inches before his eyes, like a lamp of which the oil is burned out, having vainly applied to all the physicians of Moscow and having summoned me, me who am telling you this story, from St. Petersburg, only to hear from my lips the poor girl's death-warrant,—had the idea of calling in an old Tungoose sorceress who had brought with her from Nijni-Novgorod the reputation of doing marvels. He went one night to consult her; it was Christmas Eve. The old hag received him in a hovel in the outskirts of the city, and when she had gone through her terrible incantations for his benefit, she handed him a wooden cup containing a liquid of a peculiar odor. As he was hesitating about drinking, she looked at him with a menacing countenance and said: 'You say that you love a woman, and want to save her life, even at the cost of your own, and yet you do not dare drink this unknown liquid, fearing that it may poison you.... O man, son of man, poor in spirit like all mankind.... Weep, then, and suffer like your brother men, since you cannot rise above humanity!'

"Then Vladimir Alexievitch was seized with shame; he emptied at a single draught the repulsive cup, and seemed to succumb to a sudden intoxication. A delicious warmth

ran through his body, and he became so light that it seemed as if he was about to rise from the earth and take wing. A luminous mist veiled his eyes, as if vivid rays were piercing the clouds and falling upon his vision. His blood ran bubbling through his veins, and his ears were greeted by celestial music. He had the sensation of being borne away into the immensity of space, and breezes of exquisite coolness came and kissed his brow. Little by little the knowledge of things earthly left him, and in the midst of a divine transport, a beatific ecstasy, he beheld advancing toward him, heavenly vision, a white, sublime form which, in a voice sweet and tender as an angel's song, thus addressed him:

"'Thou wishest to redeem the life of her whom thou lovest? Then give thine own in change; thy soul to her form, and thine own body to the cold grave. Thou shalt have nothing to regret, since thou wilt exist in her, and her happiness will be the source of thy joy.'

"The heavenly apparition was lost in the luminous mist, and Vladimir Alexievitch was restored to consciousness. He found himself sitting in the hovel of the old Tungoose witch, beside a smoking fire of pitch-pine. The old woman was muttering unintelligible words, and seemed to pay no heed to her guest. Terrified by what he had witnessed, the young man endeavored to collect his thoughts and reason with himself upon his strange adventure. He saw before him only an ordinary old filthy hag, who had been the means of bringing him into communication with the spirits, as the guardian of a temple opens the door of the sanctuary and admits one to the dazzling presence of the gods. He laid his hand upon the old



woman's shoulder; she turned her dull eyes upon him and said in her sardonic voice:

"'Well, have you learned what you wished to know?'

"'What were the means that you employed to take from me my consciousness of the things of the outer world? What was it that you made me drink?'

"'What matters it? Did you behold the invisible ones?'

"'What was the sorcery that you used to show them to me?'

"'Ask it of themselves.... They are there, everywhere, around you! Would you doubt? Remain, then, hopeless. Put your trust in them, and supreme delights await you.'

"The witch's form dilated, her face was irradiated with a wild, scornful beauty, and pointing to the door, she said to Vladimir Alexievitch:

"'Tempt not Heaven!... Go! and have faith... have faith!'

"He threw his purse upon the ground, but the old woman spurned it from her with her foot. She raised her arms, as in a parting invocation, and with the bright flame of inspiration flashing from her face, she repeated, in tones that thrilled the heart of the young man:

"'Have faith, poor child! There lies the road of salvation. Have faith!'

"He left her and went home. That night he spent in writing, and next morning, when they entered his apartment, he was dead."

"And his fiancée, did she recover?" Pierre Laurier inquired.

"She recovered," replied Davidoff, "but although she

was a charming girl, and greatly beloved, she would marry none of her suitors, and remained a maid, as if faithful to some dear, mysterious love."

"And do *you* believe this miracle, doctor?" Jacques de Vignes asked with an effort.

Davidoff shook his head and answered lightly:

"There is not a great deal that doctors believe nowadays. Materialism has many believers among my colleagues; still magnetism has of late assumed such strange aspects that fresh horizons have opened up before us, and we are largely attracted toward that spiritualism that maintains the existence of the soul; and if we admit the influence of mental suggestion on those who are subjected to the hypnotic sleep, is not that a near approach to belief in a higher principle which directs, and consequently controls, matter?"

"You are philosophizing, dear sir," the Prince interrupted; "you do not answer the question."

"Oh! *you*, Patrizzi," said Pierre Laurier, with a laugh; "you believe in Saint January, and when the case becomes serious you invoke the Madonna; you wear little horns of coral to protect you against the *jettatura*, and you grow pale when you see a knife and fork crossed on the tablecloth. It follows, therefore, that you are a fit subject for Davidoff's devilments; but Jacques and I have a thicker epidermis, and it would require proof to convince us."

"Still, it would be a comfortable thing to believe in, some mysterious influence that could restore us to life," the sick man murmured. "Oh, to have some supreme hope to anchor to! It would be health and safety. Does not half the cure consist in confidence?"

"I believe you!" exclaimed Pierre Laurier. "Those

are the most sensible words that have been spoken in two hours. To the devil with your witches, your Swedenborgians, your moonlight visions and your souls passing from body to body like a ferret in a rat-hole! Give a sick man certain assurance that he will get well and you accomplish his cure at once... that is all there is about it! Take my friend Jacques de Vignes here, for example, who made the doctor pack him off to the south because he caught cold; make him understand that his illness is only imaginary, that there is nothing the matter with his lungs, that he has no reason in the world to be alarmed; in a word, let him know that all that ails him is a trifling cough, and by removing the cause you remove the effect: Jacques de Vignes is at once forced to abandon his whispered tones, his languishing eyes, his Wertherian looks. He returns to life and pretty women; to his beef-steak and his cigar."

"Alas!" murmured Jacques, who was just then convulsed by a severe attack of coughing, "how I wish that there was room for hope! I am attached to life, and every day I feel that it is slipping away from me little by little."

The painter laid his hand upon the sick man's shoulder and said to him in a cheerful tone:

"You won't believe me when I tell you that you are not seriously ill; you won't believe Davidoff, who has made a thorough examination of you. You insist on retaining this brooding care and scourging yourself with it, as if it were a pleasure to you. You are grieving your mother, and you bring tears to your sister's eyes... Will nothing convince you, then? Must I do for you what Vladimir Alexievitch did and hand you over a soul in ex-

change for yours? I have only my own to dispose of, you know, and it does not amount to much; even if I should give it to you some night in a fit of spleen, I don't know that I should be making a very desirable gift. They say, however, that we must not look a gift-horse in the mouth, and the main thing is that you should live, you who have everything to make you happy, who are loved, who would be wept; while as for me, I might as well go out now and jump from the terrace of the Casino into the sea.... Who would ever miss that madcap called Pierre Laurier, that painter who is impotent to grasp his ideal, that gamester for whom the cards no longer produce an emotion, that lover spurned by his mistress, that high-liver to whom life is a burthen!" He brought down his fist with a violence that shook the table and continued, his features working with bitter emotion, his lips writhing with a cruel smile: "I am an ass to start in afresh every morning on a life that I curse every night... to the devil with it!... Jacques, will you have my soul?"

"Come, come," gently said Jacques, "you have been having another quarrel with Clémence Villa to-day. Leave her, my poor friend, if she causes you such suffering."

"How can I?" said Pierre, who had turned very pale, resting his heavy head upon his hand.

"Give her a good beating, then," calmly observed Patrizzi.

"If I only dared!" said the young man, with flashing eyes. "But that girl makes me a slave; everything that she wants she makes me do. I bear everything from her, whims, vices, deceit. At times I feel like murdering her... and it is upon myself that the blow would fall... to relieve myself of her tyranny. Oh, I am a poor-spirited

coward! I know that she is false to me with every one in the Hôtel des Étrangers... Only the other day I caught her with a ridiculous Italian baritone. She is ruining me; she is bringing me down into the dust; she is making me something lower than she is herself...And I have not strength to break my chains! Truly I am a wretched man!"

"No, you are not wretched," said the doctor, "you are ill. Let us go out; it is stifling here."

"It is ten o'clock," remarked Jacques de Vignes. "My carriage must be waiting. I will return to Villefranche."

"Wrap yourself up well," said the Prince, "for the night is cool."

The painter assisted his friend to put on his overcoat and wrapped a plaid about him; then at the foot of the staircase, in a voice that still quivered with pain, he said to him:

"Good-night, and remember—you may count upon my soul."

Doctor Davidoff saw Jacques de Vignes to his carriage, closed the door, and told the driver to go ahead; then having listened for a moment to the noise of the wheels as they rolled away over the creaking sand of the drive, he came slowly toward the painter, who stood watching the stars and waiting for him.

"Shall we go to the Casino?" asked Patrizzi.

"What is the use? It is such a fine evening, suppose we walk a bit."

"In which direction are you going?"

"Toward Mentone."

"And you will stop about half a mile from here, at a villa where the gate is overhung with roses in bloom?"

"Yes."

"And you will come out directly afterward in a rage with yourself and every one else... Take my advice: don't go to that girl's."

"Where should I go, then? If I follow your advice and return to my hotel, up there in the solitude of my room my thoughts will turn exclusively upon her whom you tell me to avoid. She has me in her clutches, don't you see? and the ties which bind me to her are strong, since for all my desperate struggles they still remain unbroken. After every effort I fall back, weaker, more badly hurt, more hopelessly a captive. And I despise myself and I hate her!"

"And yet it is easy enough to leave a woman!" said the Neapolitan with a smile. "Unfortunately we don't know it until afterward. There has to be a beginning, in the first place.... But it is an easy matter to philosophize to those who are in trouble. Good-night, gentlemen; I am going in to break the bank."

He lighted a cigarette and strolled away. Davidoff and Pierre Laurier continued their walk among the gardens that lay bathed in moonlight. The perfumed stillness of the night surrounded them. They left the streets of the city behind them, and to their right, at the base of the cliffs that indent the coast, they saw the sea, bright as a sheet of silver. The night was so clear that they could see the red lights of the vessels as they lay at anchor in the distant roadstead. Silently they walked along their elevated path. When they came to a little thicket of cactus and lentiscus they paused for a moment to let their eyes wander over the scene, oppressed, as it were, by its immensity. A sudden noise, like that of an animal

stirring in the underbrush, attracted their attention, and presently they saw, coming up the steep path that ran along the hillside, a man whose musket glittered in the moonlight.

"What is that?" Davidoff asked in surprise.

Pierre Laurier looked attentively and replied:

"It is a coast-guardsman."

They stood still. The man continued to ascend. When he reached the level ground he looked distrustfully at the two pedestrians. Although it was barely a mile and a quarter from the last houses of the city, the spot was a

lonely one; but all that coast is wild and well adapted to the smuggler's trade.

"Do you take us for dealers in contraband?" the painter demanded.

"No, monsieur," replied the soldier, "not now that I see you close at hand; but as I looked up from below, seeing you standing there motionless, I thought that you might have come to give some signal."

"Are the rascals at work again?"

"Oh, always! There is more smuggling done between Monaco and Vintimille than anywhere else; there is not a week passes without their making a descent somewhere.... We have been watching a vessel that has been lying off and on for the last four days, waiting for a chance to slip in,... but the rascals will have to pay for the nights that they have kept us out of our beds, and if they persist in landing, they will be welcomed with musket-shots. Good-evening, messieurs;... don't remain there... the place is dangerous."

He carried his hand to his képi in military style and disappeared among the undergrowth that served to cover his place of observation. Pierre Laurier and Davidoff resumed their walk, turning back in the direction of the city.

"I envy the stirring life of the men who are the objects of the threats of that good exciseman," said Pierre. "They are now roaming over the sea, watchful and circumspect, ready either for a trade or a fight. Their goods once landed, off they will go again on another expedition with its unknown perils. All that they think of is their toilsome and uncertain occupation.... I wish that I was among them."

"Go away, if you wish to. Count Woreseff, on whose yacht I am a guest, leaves Villefranche day after to-morrow. He is going to Egypt; we shall touch at Alexandria and then go up the Nile as far as the second cataract; we shall see Thebes, the desert, the pyramids. It is a two months' trip, with the timbers of a fine boat under your feet and the splendor of an Eastern sky over your head. You know how glad the Count will be to have you with him.... You can paint, you can shoot, and, above all, you can forget!"

"No, life would be made too easy; I should be too pampered, too happy with you. There would be no dangers to distract my mind, no hard work to tire my body; all my surroundings would be too civilized. What I need is a wild life; if you would only promise to have me taken prisoner by the Tovariks and led away captive to Timbuctoo, I might go with you. Something like that would be my salvation."

"I cannot promise you any such adventures as those," said Davidoff with a smile, "so I suppose I shall have to leave you to your devices."

They had reached a very handsome villa, painted pink, the brilliantly lighted windows of which shone out through dense masses of verdure.

"Your mind is made up, then; you are bound to go in?" the doctor asked. "I may not see you to-morrow, so adieu, and good luck to you."

They shook hands, and as the Russian started to return to the city, the painter passed through the garden. He rang the bell; a footman opened the door and showed him into a vestibule fashioned after an Arab patio, the centre of which was adorned with a basin in which gold-

fish were swimming about, the metallic lustre of their scales contrasting with the dark blue walls of their prison. Climbing roses twined about the columns that supported and beautified the hall, and at the farther end a staircase of white marble conducted to the first story.

"Madame is within?" Pierre Laurier inquired.

"In the small drawing-room," the servant replied.

The young man opened the door noiselessly and ad-

vanced into the room. Clémence Villa was lying on a great sofa in a nest of silken cushions, turning the leaves of a book. She raised her head, wearily stretched her arms, and retained her position. Pierre drew near, and bending over the delicate face of the pretty girl, gave her a kiss between the eyes.

"How late you are!" said the actress, with a calm indifference that contrasted with the implied reproach of her speech.

"Prince Patrizzi's dinner lasted longer than I thought it would...."

"Was it a pleasant party?"

"Not so much so as if you had been there."

"I can't endure that Patrizzi."

"Why?"

"I know that he dislikes me."

"No, he does not dislike you; but he is very fond of me."

"Well? Can't he like you without hating me?"

"He would like you if you did not make me so unhappy."

"Ah, the everlasting song!" The young woman snapped her fingers, sent her book flying to the other end of the room and flung herself over on the sofa with a peevish movement, turning her face to the wall.

"Come, Clémence, don't let's quarrel," said the painter; "we will talk of somethlng else."

But the actress, without stirring or lifting her face from her cushions, acrimoniously replied: "That Patrizzi of yours, you must know, has been pestering me with his attentions just like the rest of them, and it is because I would have nothing to do with him that he has taken a spite against me."

Laurier's face grew dark, and he said with irony: "Why did you make such an invidious exception in his case?"

At a single bound Clémence Villa was on her feet, and, blazing with anger, her eyes flashing beneath their frown-

ing brows, pointing to the door with her shaking hand, she screamed: "My little man, if you think you can come here with your insolence, you may make yourself scarce!"

"I know that you do not care for me any longer; you do not take any pains to conceal it from me," said the painter, with an air of despondency.

"What do you stay here for, then? If you only exerted yourself a little to make yourself agreeable, I could understand your obstinacy; but you spend your time in vilifying me to your friends or in insulting me to my face in my own house,... and all because I will not submit to your whims, and make myself a prisoner and never see any one but you.... What a delightful prospect!... In a single word, you are an ingrate. To please you I left Selim Nuño, who was as good to me as could be and put up with all my caprices. I was very fond of you,... oh! you know it well enough!... for before this crazy fit came on you, you were an agreeable, nice fellow,... but here for the last three months you have been losing your head altogether,... and so, good-day! It is not in my line to care for lunatics; go to an asylum."

She had posted herself with her back to the fire-place as she spoke, and the amber-like brilliancy of her flesh stood out against the red of her plush dressing-gown like ivory. Her small, curly head, upborne by a neck that was rather long, was exquisitely formed, and her bust, emerging from the opening of her dress in a setting of costly old lace, had the proud firmness of youth.

Pierre approached with hesitating steps, and seating himself upon a stool almost at the young woman's feet, said:

"Forgive me; I am in torture, for I love you, and I am jealous."

She gave him an ugly look, and replied in freezing tones:

"So much the worse! for I have made up my mind that I will endure your brutality and distrust no longer. I have had all that I could do for weeks and weeks to keep myself from telling you so, and now this settles it. It is done, done, done! You need not trouble yourself to come here any more."

The painter's face paled slightly. "You mean that for a dismissal?"

"Yes, I mean it for a dismissal."

He was silent for a moment, as if hesitating to give expression to all his thought; then, almost in a whisper, fearing and foreboding the cruel answer that was awaiting him, he asked:

"Is it because you love some one else?"

"What business is that of yours? I do not love you any longer; that is all that concerns you."

The young man's face flushed, and his hands shook nervously. He gnawed his mustache, and smiled with affected indifference.

"Tell me at least if I am to have a worthy successor? A man has a little pride under such circumstances...!"

"You need not be alarmed," Clémence angrily interrupted. "I shall not be a loser by the change. He is young, he is rich, he is handsome,—and I have had my eye on him this long time.... You know him, too; he is one of your friends."

While the artist, stupefied by such effrontery, was asking himself whether he was awake or dreaming, the

young woman went on with calculating cruelty, distilling her words slowly into his ear as if they had been drops of mortal poison.

"You left him but a little while ago; he dined with you this evening."

"Davidoff?" cried Pierre.

"You fool!" sneered Clémence. "What, that cynic of a Russian who despises women and would drive them

with the knout? Do you think that I have taken leave of my senses? No; the man who has caught my fancy is a splendid young fellow, gentle and melancholy, and ailing a little; but he believes in love, and will give himself up entirely to it."

At these words Pierre made a bound, and seizing the actress by the wrists, notwithstanding the resistance that she offered, caused her to bend like a reed. For an instant their faces were close together, their looks intermingled, and so they remained for the space of a few seconds, breathing forth rage and hate. At last the painter said in a trembling voice:

"It was Jacques de Vignes that you meant when you spoke just now?"

"It was he."

"Do you know that he is dangerously ill with consumption?"

"I am glad that it is so... I will nurse him. I have always wished for a pure love."

"You made up that story to torture me, did you not? Come, tell me; is there a single word of truth in the whole of it?"

"You will see!"

"Clémence, be careful!"

The young woman's eyes flashed angrily, and she moved toward the bell, but so hurriedly that her feet became entangled in the folds of her long skirts. This afforded Pierre time to grasp her by the arm.

"You threaten me in my own house!" she screamed; "well, I will have that Jacques of yours... yes, I will have him, if it is only to spite you!"

The painter, with a movement of disgust, pushed her

from him so violently that she reeled and fell backward upon the divan. He took his hat, and said, in a thick voice:

"You miserable creature! After what has passed, I would die sooner than be friends with you again. Go on...

continue in your vile life! It matters not to me. I will never look upon your face again!"

He opened the door with his clenched fist, as if he would make inanimate things the object of that rage which he could not vent on flesh and blood, and with rapid steps went forth into the garden. Behind him he heard

the clatter of the electric bell beneath the pressure of angry fingers, the footsteps of the servant hurrying over the tiled floor of the vestibule and the stormy voice of Clémence screaming her orders. He hurried on so as not to hear them further. He was seized and carried away by an exasperation that made him feel like killing some one ; he had fled that he might not yield to the temptation of striking Clémence ; and now, in the open air, beneath the star-lit sky, in the midst of the dark night that brought him a comforting sensation, invigorated by the cool sea-breeze that was blowing through the orange trees in bloom, a great sentiment of shame began to take possession of his mind. Could it be possible that during the last year he had committed, for the sake of that creature, all the wretched follies that now came crowding back upon his memory ; that he had passively submitted to humiliations of which he now keenly felt all the bitterness ? In order to keep Clémence in luxury he had spent all that he had, and then run in debt to his friends. He had frittered away his talent in senseless pleasure until it had refused to be further productive, and he had spent whole days at a time in his studio, dreaming over pictures that he could not summon up resolution to commence : long, despairing hours, passed in doubt and anxiety, in asking himself whether the creative faculty was not dead within him, and if ever in his life he should be able to set to work again like a man. And this, all for that vile creature who had deceived him ! He was really too big a fool ; she was right in despising him, and it was a lucky chance for him that had induced her to give him his freedom.

Now he felt that he was again master of his destiny.

He was rescued from the ghoul who had been stealing away his brain at the same time that she wrung his heart-strings. He would be himself again; his works should falsify the report, that was beginning to be current, that his talent was drying up.

"Yes, yes! She shall see what I will accomplish now that I am no longer burthened with her! Before a month is over she shall regret me, in her vanity at least, if not in her love!"

Revolving these thoughts in his mind, he walked along the road that skirts the sea toward Vintimille. The lights af Monaco were behind him, lost in the darkness, and he was alone at the base of an overhanging cliff. At his feet the beach stretched away on either hand, and the waves were breaking with a monotonous sound upon the rocks. The moon was now and then concealed by floating clouds, and the view was shrouded in obscurity. Pierre seated himself upon a sand-hill at the side of the road and surrendered himself to his reflections.

His coolness was beginning to return to him, his rage had subsided, and he was able to estimate his position more clearly. The resolutions that he had formed for the future were excellent, but would he have strength enough to carry them into execution? He knew what he had to look for from his weakness. Ten times already he had sworn that he would leave her who had thus brought ruin to his life, and each time he had returned to her more tamely, only, of course, to be treated with greater scorn, but enduring everything that he might receive from her one caress. It was a strange infatuation, which, reducing him to this bondage of love, left him clear-headed enough to read the character of her who thus held him in her

power, and not brave enough to break the chain that bound him to his degrading thraldom.

He said to himself: "After having promised myself so

faithfully that I will never return to her, can it be that I shall be such a cur as to present myself there to-morrow?" and in the silence of the night he answered aloud: "No!"

but as if to brave him, Clémence's little brown head appeared before him, with its bright and fascinating eyes. He beheld it distinctly, smiling upon him as in bravado, and it seemed to him that he could read upon its lips the very words that he had so many times heard them utter.

"What! You leave me! You could never have the courage! I might dismiss you, but you would return in spite of everything, like a dog that is beaten but remains faithful still. Could you live without me? Am I not indispensable to your existence? Was it not I that afforded you sensations that you never knew before? I have become part of your flesh, your blood, the very marrow of your bones. There is no woman that can fill my place; after me the world is void and empty, and you would find there only ennui, disgust, weariness, and sorrow. Come back, then! Do not affect a useless pride! I drove you from my door to-night, but to-morrow I await you. These are but the quarrels of lovers, who beat each other and then embrace again, only made more passionate by their momentary difference, their love inflamed by resistance, like tigers that tear each other while they caress, mingling pain and pleasure. Were you to return at this moment, perhaps you would find my anger gone; perhaps you would find me alone, awaiting you, more fond than ever. What keeps you? A feeling of false pride? What is the effort that is required to vanquish a scruple of self-respect, when compared with the delights which I reserve for you and which you know so well?"

The sorceress evoked by his fevered imagination smiled upon him and beckoned him seductively with her white arms. He beheld her distinctly in her brilliantly lighted

chamber; his heart beat so violently as to take away his breath, and giving a deep sigh, he arose to go to her.

A breath of cool wind came and caressed his forehead and awoke him from his dream; he saw himself at the foot of the cliff, with the sea before him, far from the city, and the image of the woman who so possessed his being faded away in the deep transparency of the sky. He shuddered at the thought that he was still so completely her slave. Had he been near the villa, instead of far away in the open country, he would instantaneously have been at her feet, without allowing himself time to reflect or collect himself. A feeling of rage took possession of him. It spoke the truth, then, that apparition which a moment before had defied him to break his fetters. What could he do not to fall again into the clutches of that fatal mistress? Would distance be sufficient to separate him from her? And who should say that in some moment of madness he would not arise and go to her again? Sane, in full possession of his faculties, armed with all the detestation of her that had risen fervid in his mind, he dared not ask himself the question for fear of being obliged to confess to himself that there was nothing that could restrain him.

He was possessed by a feeling of deepest discouragement and despair; he saw how unworthy his life had been, how base his conduct, how ignominious his weak irresolution. She had deceived him; he was aware of it, and yet had not sufficient pride to keep him from going to her. And then what griefs, what sorrows must he look forward to in that life which could only become more unendurable in proportion as he showed himself more weak! And what would be the end of it all? An ignoble death in

some wild fit of jealousy; a senseless, degrading suicide, which would appear among the gossip of the newspapers, afflicting those of his friends who had remained faithful to him to the last. Was it not better to end it then and there, beneath the deep heavens, before the peaceful sea, while he felt himself still worthy of having sincere tears shed in his behalf?

He stood dreaming in the tranquil moonlight, among the odorous herbage, and gradually his thoughts turned from the bad woman.

It was now a peaceful, smiling home, concealed among masses of verdure, the abode of a family united in bonds of love, that rose upon his memory,—the home of his friend Jacques de Vignes, where he lived with his mother and sister. Life would assuredly have been full of charm to them had not fell disease fallen threatening upon this great good-looking fellow who had such a passionate yearning for life. What was wanting to make them happy? Health, for the son and the brother that they loved so fondly; health alone. But, O irony of destiny! day by day Jacques hung his head, weaker, more melancholy, as if drawing closer to that earth within whose bosom he was soon to disappear. And that one was in despair, while *he* would have so readily surrendered up his life at that moment when, utterly wearied and disgusted, he counted it of so little worth. If he could but make a bargain with his friend and bestow upon him his excess of strength, would it not be the salvation of the sad-faced, mournful young man whom he loved so tenderly?

Just at this moment Doctor Davidoff's story recurred to his memory, and his lips contracted in a bitter smile. Supposing that this mysterious resurrection were possible.

that the charm would really work and that it might be granted him to transfer his own miserable, tortured soul to the wasting form of the beloved being whose vital energy was so surely ebbing away, would it not be a blessed miracle?

Suddenly a melancholy reflection caused his head to sink upon his breast. He thought: "She told me that she loved him. If I became identified with his being, would I not then be loved by her? Her beauty and her grace would be for my delighted enjoyment; mine would be all her smiles and all her kisses." He shuddered. For so long time tenderness had been absent from the caresses of her whom he worshipped still, as he had to acknowledge now, and whom he could not make up his mind to leave!

Standing solitary in the night among the rocks, fronting the immensity of sky and sea, he stretched his will-force to its utmost tension in a supreme invocation. He appealed to all invisible powers. "If they exist," he said to himself, "if, as is declared to be true, there are hovering in the air around us, impalpable as it, mysterious beings, let them reveal themselves to me by signs that I may understand and I am ready to yield obedience to them. I surrender myself to them by the sacrifice of my own being. Standing here, a thing of flesh and blood, I return to immateriality and I forsake my being with delight to be no more, and consequently no more to suffer, groan, and weep. Let them speak, in the voice of the breeze, in the murmur of the waves, in the rustling of the plants, and to go to meet them I pass the gates of death."

He had no more than finished his incantation than he shivered, frightened by his loneliness. He looked fear-

fully about him. No soul was stirring on the cliff, there was not a sail upon the sea, and before him stretched the boundless sky. Suddenly the moon shone out from a rift in the clouds, and in the belt of light it seemed to Pierre that white spectres were passing to and fro. He cast his eyes downward upon the sheet of water that lay before him, and will-o'-the-wisps appeared to him, flitting among the rocks. They danced about, hither, thither, nimble, brilliant, now vanishing to appear again, like the souls of shipwrecked mariners condemned to roam to all eternity about the breakers among which the bones that they had inhabited had perished.

Pierre was fascinated and could not turn his looks from the shadowy phantoms, the elusive lights, and a kind of torpor took possession of him. A murmuring filled his ears, and the sounds that were confused and indistinct at first became defined, singing: "Come with us, where suffering is no more. Die, to live again incarnate in the creature of thy choice. Come, O come with us!"

Pierre made an effort to shake off this hallucination, but it was fruitless. He was dazed, incapable of motion, as if he were in a cataleptic state. His gaze was lost in the illimitable stretch of sea and sky, and the supernatural voices kept ringing in his ears,—"Come, O come with us!" He reflected: "The revelation that I sought has been granted me; the spirits have manifested themselves. I believe in them, I will obey them; but let them cease from haunting me."

As if he had given utterance to a magical formula, the vision disappeared, the voices were silent. He arose and walked upon the deserted shore; he might have believed that it was all a dream. But he did not so believe. With

a strange longing he dwelt upon the mystery that had been shown to him. He wished that it might prove real; he saw in it the wished-for end of all his woes.

He climbed to the summit of the slope, stopped, took out his pocket-book and wrote these words on a card:

"My dear Jacques, I am useless to others, noxious to myself. I mean to change this state of affairs. I am about to make in my person another trial of the experience that Davidoff told us of. You are the dearest one to me in all the world; to you I bequeath my soul. Live, and be happy, through me and for my sake."

He signed the note, and taking off his hat, inserted the folded paper between it and its silken band. He calmly removed his overcoat, placed it, together with his hat, at the side of the road, and slowly descended again toward the shore. The coast was indented at this spot, forming a little bay, at the end of which the waves came up and died away with a gentle murmur. A path, running upward along the side of the cliff, led to a little collection of fishermen's huts. Pierre's attention was soon attracted by a vessel that was slowly approaching, impelled by a belated breeze that filled its close-reefed sail. She seemed to be without a crew, but as she drew ahead and approached the shore, sailors showed themselves at bow and stern. At the same time men came forth from behind the rocks, and, entering the water, waded out toward the craft. The stern was heaped with bales and casks.

The painter, whose interest was aroused despite the trouble of his mind, rightly concluded that they were the smugglers of whose probable coming the coast-guard had told him. He instinctively turned to look for the man among the undergrowth where he had sheltered himself,

but he had doubtless left his post, for there was no sign of movement upon the cliff. The men from the rocks had mingled with those of the vessel, and trips back and forth had begun to be made; some of the merchandise had already been landed, when suddenly their operations were

disturbed by a shrill whistle from the heights above. The landsmen fled over the sandy beach, the sailors hurriedly prepared to secure their offing. At the same moment a musket-shot echoed through the silence, and the rocks

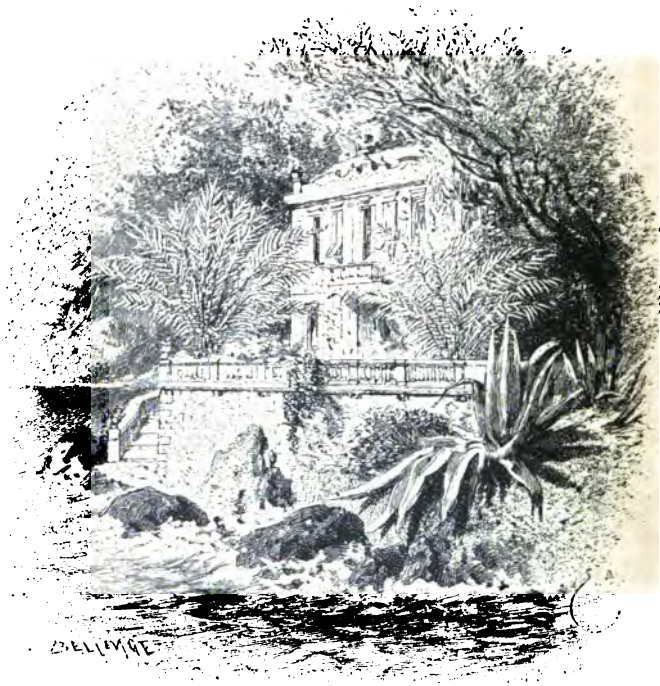
were illuminated by the red flash. It was the revenue guard announcing his presence. Another report followed from a near-by point, and shadows began to be seen running about upon the cliff-side.

The fishermen climbed up the pathway with their bales and the smugglers shoved their craft off into deep water. While this was going on, a sailor fell overboard. Shouts were heard. They came from the coast-guardsmen, who were uniting their forces. The vessel was standing off, and the sailor whom she was leaving behind her in the water was shouting at the top of his voice. His struggles were becoming wilder and his voice was growing weaker. Pierre was touched by the heart-rending cries of this fellow-creature; a moment before he had only thought of dying, now the instinct of preservation was strong within him. He rushed toward the water's brink, leaping from rock to rock, barely missed receiving several bullets on his way, reached the shore in safety, and, plunging into the sea, swam with vigorous strokes toward the drowning man.

When a few hundred feet off shore, the vessel had come up in the wind and stopped. The smugglers had disappeared among the thickets of the hillside, and over the sea that lay there bright and smooth as a mirror the moon was pouring her cold, calm light.

II.

ON the delightful shore road that runs from Monaco to Nice, a little beyond Eze and this side of Villefranche,



on the bank of a small bay that is formed by an indentation in the cliff, there is a pink-and-white villa, the terraces of which, verdant with orange trees and mimosas, are

laved by the blue waters of the gulf. Pines, red-trunked and widely branching, junipers, dark blue of hue, and black thujas grow upon the slopes among the heather, where they can find a foothold among the rocks, enframing in a setting of wild forest this isolated, peaceful, silent valley. A little haven, protected by a natural jetty of rocks, on which the tide breaks in clouds of foam, affords anchorage-ground for two pleasure-boats that rest idly upon the calm and transparent water, to which the various marine growths impart in spots a hue of emerald green. The red earth absorbs the sunlight and warms the atmosphere of this sheltered nook, where all day long there reigns a hot-house temperature; at evening the air is cool and loaded with exquisite perfumes from the trees green with sempiternal foliage and the plants bright with blooms that are ceaselessly renewed. Little fishing-boats, coming from Beaulieu and making for Monaco, cruise slowly in the offing and serve, by their lazy movements, to impart a little animation to the horizon. The railroad that runs along the hillside behind the villa is the only thing that disturbs, by the roar of passing trains, the cheerful quietude of this peaceful spot. Here it was that Mme. de Vignes had come with her son and daughter, two months ago, to take up her abode away from the bustle of Parisian life, in the sweet and health-giving reposefulness of this enchanted region.

Left a widow at thirty, after a life which the pranks of a rakish husband had served to render a stormy one, Mme. de Vignes had devoted all her great intelligence and loving tenderness to the education of her children. Jacques, a tall, handsome, blond young man, of passionate nature and ardent character, had early shown that he in-

herited his father's disposition, notwithstanding the good advice that was administered to him in large quantities every day. His sister Juliette, four years younger than he, by a happy contrast seemed to resemble her mother in her serious gravity of character, so that if the widow was to look forward to receiving many anxieties at the hands of one, she might equally expect to find her consolation in the other. And so Mme. de Vignes had lived a life of comparative tranquillity, with these so essentially different natures at her side, until she had reached the age of forty. Jacques, who was extremely intelligent and not lazier than the common run, had brought his studies to a brilliant close. His health had been delicate during his early days, but had improved with advancing years, and when he had come to his majority his lofty stature, his light mustaches, and his blue eyes made him as good-looking a young fellow as you would be apt to meet in the course of a long summer day. This was a fact that he was quite well aware of, and he had not been slow to take advantage of it.

As soon as he came into possession of his father's fortune, he cast off his leading-strings, and installing himself in elegant bachelor's quarters, proceeded to lead a gay life. He came back to the nest, however, now and again to ask his mother for a bit of dinner, and on such occasions he was frequently accompanied by one of the friends of his boyish days, Pierre Laurier the painter. These were always red-letter evenings at the house, and Juliette lavished her most loving attentions upon her brother and her most dulcet smiles upon the friend who, whether correctly or the reverse, she imagined to have counted something in bringing about these returns of the prodigal son.

Thanks to the painter's brightness and originality, the evening would pass away gayly, and as the hours slipped swiftly by, the young girl—for Mlle. de Vignes was then only fourteen years old—would sit and gaze upon the young man in a sort of ecstatic bliss.

For a long time she had looked with fear upon Pierre Laurier, with his expressive and intelligent features, his piercing eyes, his sarcastic mouth, and his polished brow, but she had quickly come to recognize that the oddity of his humor was only due to his artistic preoccupations and that his mocking tones only served as a mask to conceal the confiding goodness of his heart. Amid his fantastic discourse she could very well distinguish that profound love of his art which entirely engrossed him, and in his fiery tirades was manifest to her his unconquerable passion for the beautiful and the good. With remarkable penetration, she had discovered that the painter was using all his efforts to check Jacques in his ways of dissipation and that his influence could not be otherwise than beneficent. This had served to increase her love for him. He was on brotherly terms with the child, concealing, for her sake, the bitterness of his scepticism and becoming playful and innocent in order to bring himself more nearly to her level.

In this he showed but small discernment, for Juliette, with precocious understanding, was quite in position to see through him, but Pierre obstinately refused to see anything more in her than the hoydenish girl of her years, and it was always with the greatest astonishment that when, putting aside her natural timidity, she ventured to give utterance to a few sentences, he heard opinions of singular good sense fall from her lips. He did not give

her the credit which was her due; he merely said to himself: "This is really a surprising child; she remembers what she hears and brings it in apropos to the occasion. Every woman is part monkey to imitate and part parrot to repeat!"

Still, if it was true that Juliette possessed faculties of assimilation in matters of art, she was entirely natural in the tender effusion of thanks that she addressed to Laurier for the protection that he extended to her brother. In that there was no imitation, no repetition. It was the heart of the child that spoke, and the painter, absorbed as he was by thoughts and cares to which Mlle. de Vignes was an entire stranger, could not fail to be struck by this emotion and this gratitude.

A trifling incident had occurred, however, of which he alone grasped the true significance and which had completely opened his eyes. On St. Juliette's day he had always been accustomed to bring a name-day gift to this child whom he had known ever since she was born. As long as she was a little girl, these gifts had been dolls, extravagantly attired in the most magnificent dresses made according to the painter's taste and cut from his design, just as if they were to serve as models for one of his pictures. Exclamations of surprise and cries of joy greeted him every time that he came to the family dinner bearing in his arms the annual doll. Laurier would take the child by the shoulders, give her a resounding kiss on either cheek, and say in his railing way:

"*That's* a pretty one, hey? That is a Venetian—time of Titian!"

Then he would begin to talk to Mme. de Vignes and Jacques, giving no further attention to the little girl who

sat there gazing ecstatically upon her porcelain patrician clad in silk and gold. When Juliette was fourteen years old, however, he thought that toys were beginning to be rather out of season, and he cast about to find a more appropriate gift for her. He made choice of a little work-box of the eighteenth century, of exquisite design and furnished with beautiful implements in silver-gilt, and in accordance with his usual custom he came in at dinner-time. Jacques was alone in the drawing-room. The two friends shook hands, and Laurier having inquired where Juliette was:

"My mother is dressing her," Jacques replied. "It is an important occasion: her first long dress! We are to have the honor of the first view, and you may imagine what a to-do there is about it! The arrangement of the hair had to be changed too—we could not wear our hair hanging down our back with our new dress on. The chignon became a matter of necessity!"

He was laughing still when the door opened, and in place of the child whom Laurier's eyes were accustomed to behold, there entered the salon a young girl, changed in every respect; a little timid, a little awkward, but charming. She did not run up to the painter, as usual, with her kittenish curiosity; she held out her hand to him in a pretty way, and stopped, tongue-tied, before the two young men as if embarrassed. Pierre looked at her with a kindly smile. He said:

"You are looking very nicely, Juliette. If I might be allowed to indulge myself in a very small bit of criticism, I would say that I do not like those little curls upon your forehead. You have a prettily shaped face, and your hair grows so as to set it off well; wear it drawn straight

back, then; it is younger, and I am sure that it will become you." Then drawing from his pocket the gift that he had brought: "You see—it is something that will be useful to you. I am treating you like a grown-up person to-day, like the rest."

"Oh, how pretty!" exclaimed the child, her eyes dancing with joy. "Just look, Jacques!"

"It is a work of art, my child. This painter has been committing extravagances. Suppose you give him a kiss, anyway?"

It was the custom. For years and years, on that day, Pierre had been used to kiss Juliette, and yet they now stood facing each other for a moment, as if not knowing what to do with themselves. Whether it was the long dress and the new *coiffure* that produced this embarrassment in them both, or whether it was the child blossoming forth into the young girl, like a rosebud opening to the first rays of the sun, Pierre seemed to have lost that spontaneous impulse which had formerly always impelled him fraternally toward Juliette.

Jacques, looking at them with astonishment, had to exclaim:

"Well! what has come over you? Are you not acquainted with each other any longer?"

Thereupon Mlle. de Vignes took one step forward, Pierre took two, and they were in each other's arms. The young man bent his face down toward that of his little friend, she raised herself slightly on the tips of her toes, and with singular emotion Laurier felt her trembling and growing pale beneath his kiss. During the whole evening he seemed disturbed, talking but little, as if beset by some secret preoccupation.

From this time forth he showed himself circumspect in his relations with Juliette and was very guarded in his utterances. At the same time, he closely observed her whom only the week before he was treating as a baby, and it was clear to him that a rapid change was going on in her. Her form had developed into proportions of rounded grace, her complexion was beautified with a bloom like that of the peach, and the impetuous movements of her earlier days were subdued into a more dignified and elegant carriage. The chrysalis had opened and a brilliant butterfly had come forth that caused all eyes to turn and look at it. Owing to this metamorphosis, Pierre's mind was drawn into a state of agitation which he found some difficulty in subduing.

His dreams were now of things quite different from what they had been hitherto. Artistic triumphs and the unregulated life calculated to ensure them, the excitement of the mental powers by means of a diversity of sensations, everything that had formed part of the programme of his past life was now deemed by him despicable and ridiculous. It seemed to him that the tranquillity of the fireside, the repose of the heart, the regular succession of days well employed must be quite as efficacious means of producing high-class work, and that there was more chance of inspiration from continuous, conscientious toil than from spasmodic, ill-directed effort. Marriage appeared to him like an untried spring, in the waters of which he might bathe and come forth with increased powers. He thought of changing his way of life and giving himself the reward of virtue, and he allowed himself to look upon Mlle. de Vignes with a tenderness that had nothing in common with the frank comradeship of other days.

No one noticed this except the girl herself. Jacques was too much engrossed in his pleasures, and her mother was too anxious about the disorderly life that Jacques was leading, to suspect for a moment what was passing in the painter's mind. Juliette, surprised at first at this sudden change in the sentiments of her friend, then gratified to think that she was loved by one whom she looked upon as a superior man, had soon to experience the bitterness of a disillusion. The flame which had been lighted and which seemed about to blaze up so brightly all at once went out. Pierre, who had been very assiduous in his visits to Mlle. de Vignes, now went there, as in former days, only at irregular intervals, and all the bright hopes that the young girl had cherished in secret took flight, like day-dreams.

She did not yield so easily, however, and undertook to learn what it was that kept the painter away. One evening, when Jacques had come alone to spend a few moments with his mother, Juliette made bold to express her astonishment that they never saw anything of Pierre Laurier any more.

"Is he not in Paris?" she inquired.

"Yes," Jacques replied, "but he scarcely ever leaves his studio. He has the fever of work on him."

The young girl breathed more freely. Work was a rival whose competition she did not fear. She went on:

"And what is he doing?"

"A portrait."

Juliette gave a start at these words, carelessly uttered by her brother; she seemed to hear a threat lurking in them. This portrait could not be a mere ordinary likeness, and this work, to which Pierre had devoted himself

so passionately, could not otherwise than exercise an influence on the destinies of them all. She saw everything dark about her, as if the sun had gone under a cloud, and her heart was oppressed by forebodings of evil. She continued:

"And this portrait is of some well-known person?"

"Oh, very well known indeed!"

"Who is it, pray?"

"An actress."

"What is her name?"

Jacques commenced to laugh, and looking at his sister with surprise: "Really, you are very inquisitive this evening," said he. "I would like to know what difference it makes to you whether the original of Pierre's portrait is named Miss So-and-So or Miss Such-and-Such."

"I am interested."

"Well! the lady of the portrait is Mlle. Clémence Villa. She is small, dark, has black eyes, very fine teeth, an abominable reputation, and very little talent. In spite of all that, or because of it, she is very successful. Do you wish to know how old she is? Twenty-four or thereabout. Her country? Beautiful Italy, land of Vermouth and Bologna sausage. Her opinions? Liberal, if not as regards money, at least with her affections. But you are making me talk folly. That is what one gets for conversing with children! The portrait is a fine one, that is enough for you to know, and Pierre's reputation won't suffer by it."

The conversation turned upon other subjects, but the painful impression that Juliette had received was not dispelled. In spite of herself, her thoughts would revert to this woman whom she could not help considering bad,

and she suspected that she was loved by him to whom she had sat for her likeness. She said to herself, "It is she who has taken him away from me. Since he has known her, we see nothing more of him. He is ashamed to come here."

Juliette was not very far from the truth in her naïve reasoning. Pierre now felt ill at ease in the house of Mme. de Vignes; he felt that the eyes of his friend's sister were upon him. His conscience was uneasy and reproached him with having been too quick to retire, after having advanced inconsiderately, and he conceived a feeling of anger against himself which kept him away from her whom he respected too highly to think, now, of loving. He thought: "You have behaved yourself like a regular rascal, my boy; you took the risk of trifling with the affections of this child so as to satisfy a dawning caprice, and then your sentiments and ideas shifted at the bidding of the first thing in petticoats that you came across. Go and keep company with your huzzies; you are worthy only of them, and you and they were made to understand one another. Birds of a feather flock together; go and associate with the shameless. Live in the fever of a fictitious passion, let the deathly intoxication burn your brain, confine yourself to the grossness of your chance-met loves, but no longer aspire to the purity, the sweetness, the delight of a chaste and holy love; the freshness and the whiteness of the young girl are no longer for you. You preferred the mud that has been trodden under foot by every one; you cannot have the white new-fallen snow."

And to conform to the rule of conduct that his fierce pessimism had laid down for him, the painter gave him

self up still more ardently to pleasure, caring so much the less to keep Jacques' excesses within bounds that he now shared his extravagances. What was only a cause of moral trouble to the one, however, was to the other the origin of a grievous physical deterioration. If Pierre could pass through the flames of the hell of their headlong life without burning, Jacques, less hardened than he, was wasting his strength and using up his life. It seemed as if Laurier was made of iron; work and play were alike to him, he attacked them both with equal boldness. After the maddest night, he would be seen next morning in his atelier, palette on thumb, as if he had just got out of bed after eight hours of innocent slumber. A more metallic ring in his voice, a more feverish activity of movement were the only things that betrayed fatigue. And at night he was ready to begin it all over again.

Jacques, on the contrary, his back more bent, his chest more hollow, his eyes more sunken, gave evidence in his whole person of a ruin that was day by day becoming more complete. His mother tried to induce him to come to her, to withdraw him from the life that was killing him. He promised that he would come, that he would rest, break with his habits, his friends, his dissipated courses; he could not. With deepest despair, Madame de Vignes saw the son, like the father, following the road, of which every stage, so well known to her, was marked by sorrows, and which ended in speedy and inevitable death.

In the mean time the exposition had opened, and, secretly influenced by an eager curiosity, Juliette had requested her mother to take her there. She took but slight interest in modern painting; what attracted her with a

disturbing and uncontrollable force was that portrait of Clémence Villa, the sitting for which had corresponded in such a fatal way with Pierre Laurier's change of attitude toward her. Accompanied by her mother, who had not the remotest idea of the impulses which were dictating her action, Mlle. de Vignes passed with a rapid and careless step through the rooms where thousands of meaningless canvases were displayed in their cold mediocrity. She went on without a pause, looking for the only picture that had any value in her eyes.

All at once she stopped and stood motionless, transfixed; in front of her, twenty paces away, at the extreme end of the room, set in its black outer frame, the portrait of a small, dark, pale woman had met her hungry gaze. Without ever having seen her, she had recognized her at a glance. There could be no mistake, it was she; no other could have been possessed of that fatal, wicked beauty which carried a chill to the soul. With an effort Juliette made her way through a group of admirers that stood in front of the guard-rope and approached the picture. Her mother, carried along with her, looked tranquilly at the portrait, and in a tone of satisfaction:

"See!" said she, "it is Pierre Laurier's picture. It is really very remarkable."

Juliette paled slightly. The reflection that her mother had uttered had occurred to her at the same moment, accompanied by a deep feeling of sorrow. Yes, the work was a remarkable one, and the painter's talent had never been carried to a higher point. The fine lights of the face, shaded by a hat with great plumes, the radiant coloring of the shoulders, showing above an entrancing costume Louis XVI., the alluring pose of the hand, resting on a

long cane, the dazzling brightness of the eyes and the charm of the smile, all bore witness to the inspiration that could have had its origin only in the heart of a lover.

The man who had looked upon this woman in her beauty and had reproduced her on canvas with such warmth of passion must have been madly in love, and everything was

made clear, if it could not be excused, in the light of her voluptuous grace.

Tears came to the girl's eyes, and her heart beat as if it would burst. In the midst of the admiring crowd, uttering aloud the name of the painter and that of the model, Mlle. de Vignes suffered frightfully. Two young men, standing close at her side directly before the picture and who took no pains not to be heard, concluded their praise with these words:

"And besides, he is her lover."

Juliette blushed as if she had received an insult, and trembling at the idea that she might overhear other words which would throw a still more cruel light upon the mystery which excited at the same time her curiosity and her indignation, she drew her mother away to the adjoining room.

From this day forward she became more serious, with a tinge of melancholy, which failed to attract Mme. de Vignes' attention. The two women had only too many causes for grief, and Juliette would have surprised her mother more had she been cheerful than she did by being sad. Their summer in the country had been a lonely one, Jacques continuing to lead his life of pleasure at the watering-places, Trouville or Dieppe, and making short visits to his mother at longer and longer intervals, while Pierre was become entirely invisible to them and was devoting himself zealously to his art, as was evidenced by the frequent appearance at the picture-dealers' of canvases signed with his name. Never did time seem longer and sadder than that spent by the two women between June and October. They had ample leisure to reflect upon all

the cares and sorrows that life was preparing for them in the future.

The season was a splendid one; the sky was without a cloud and the temperature was delicious. At evening mother and daughter would walk in the garden and watch the stars as they shone out in the clear sky, and the tranquillity that pervaded all nature was in painful contrast to their agitated minds. They would walk to and fro, to and fro, without ever speaking a word, for they wished to conceal their troubles from each other, walking in the darkness which hid their drawn, set features. The two beings who, in all the world, were all in all to them were far away, and everything else was indifferent. The charms of nature, splendid as they were, were unheeded by them. The gentle breeze, loaded with perfume from all growing things, the pure, calm radiance of the mysterious heavens, the murmur of the leaves rustling above their heads,—everything which would have charmed and delighted them had only the dear absent ones been with them to share their impressions, left them weary and impassive. And day by day, night by night, invincibly, the same desolation kept pressing down upon them.

Juliette had developed greatly; she had grown taller and her face was charming. She was now seventeen years old, and her seriousness had converted her into a woman. Her mother took pleasure in adorning her person. The partiality which she had always felt for her son did not blind her sufficiently to prevent her seeing the budding graces of her daughter. After looking at her for a long time one day, she said to her:

"You are really growing pretty!"

A fleeting smile passed over Juliette's face, and she

shook her head without speaking. Of what use was her beauty to her! The only one for whose admiration she cared was not there.

Autumn was setting in when serious intelligence

brought Mme. de Vignes back to Paris. Her son, after struggling desperately against his constantly increasing weakness, had all at once given way. He had been seized with hemorrhage, and his friends had taken him,

in a dying condition, as it was thought, to his mother's house. The grief caused by this circumstance at once put an end to the young girl's reveries. She idolized her brother, and hastening to him at once in company with her mother, she was terrified at the condition in which they found him. He had scarcely strength to arise when they entered his room; of the once handsome Jacques there remained but a phantom. The physicians being summoned in consultation, it was decreed that he should at once take his departure for the south, and so, toward the end of November, the de Vignes family were installed in the villa that was bathed by the blue sea and shaded by woods of pine and juniper, among the red rocks.

Youth has powerful resources at its command, and once there, Jacques began to pick up. The heat, the light, the regular mode of life had exercised their beneficent influence, and if the sick man was not completely cured, he had at least gained strength to such an extent that his case was no longer despaired of. He went about pale, bent, tottering, shaken by terrible fits of coughing, but he was alive, and if he was willing to take great care of himself, he might live for a long time in this way. It was not sufficient for Jacques, however, that this result had been attained, and the relief afforded to his disease did not satisfy him at all. His desires had returned with his returning strength, and the impossibility of gratifying them caused him an irritation which vented itself in bitter words and violent recriminations. In his exacerbated mind a parallel was constantly going on between what he had been and what he was now. His present debility seemed unsupportable to him when compared with his past activity, and the only use that he made of his return-

ing strength was to bemoan his fate and curse it. No resignation, not a bit of gentleness; only one ceaseless lament and envious irritation.

Pierre Laurier's arrival, however, had effected a happy diversion of his ennuis; he felt himself stronger and less discouraged in company with his friend. Everything

which before left him weary or indifferent had begun to have attraction for him again. He no longer remained stretched out on his reclining-chair all day, or remained buried in his great wicker-work easy-chair on the terrace; he walked and drove during the warm hours of the day, and the distraction had a favorable influence on his health. He was less gloomy, consented to receive visitors, and had not declined an offer which the painter had made to bring to the villa a very queer Russian physician, reputed by his *confrères* to be a quack, but famous by reason of some extraordinary cures that he had achieved.

Doctor Davidoff, quartered at Monaco with his friend Count Woresef, was the only son of a wheat-merchant of Odessa, who had died a millionaire ten times over. He had therefore been able to follow his own inclinations, abandon practice, and devote his time to studying humanity in its physical ills and moral miseries. He had quickly produced a deep impression upon Jacques' imagination. His theory was to restore confidence to those whom he treated, assuring them that immediate benefit would be the result.

"Only have the conviction that you are going to get well," he said to Jacques, "and the thing is already half accomplished; nature will take it upon her to do the remainder. She asks nothing better than to help the ailing, only they must help themselves as well. There is no other cause for the effects produced by the waters of la Salette and Lourdes in your own country; the virtue of the draught resides in the mind of him who drinks it. Feeling the certainty that the holy water will act upon him, he already feels the longed-for benefit. For this reason it is useless to send unbelievers upon these healing pilgrim-

ages, just as sceptics should not attend the séances of the spiritualists; they have within themselves forces which react against the efforts of the adepts and neutralize the fluids. Experiments are never successful when made under such conditions. In the same way, the mysterious forces of nature, working to effect a cure, will never produce favorable effects in an organism that is weakened by fear and cast down by doubt. Jesus, who was one of the great thaumaturgists of antiquity, said to those who asked him to heal them, 'Believe.' In fact, everything is summed up in that one word."

From the very first Jacques had been deeply interested in these theories, skilfully elucidated as they were by the Russian doctor; then little by little their subtile germ had penetrated his mind and borne fruit there. There were moments when hope returned to the sick man, and he said to himself: "After all, why may I not get well?" He called to mind wonderful instances of recovery; complaints, in a much more advanced stage than his, at first checked, and then disappearing entirely without leaving a trace behind, enabling those who had been the victims of the disease to lead a free life of pleasure exactly like the strongest and most healthy. Oh! to live, to go and come without constraint, without precaution, to act according to his fancy, no longer to stand in fear of pleasure! To be rid of doctors and nurses, to laugh at their dictatorial ways and scorn their restrictions, to be able to be imprudent at will! What a sweet dream! And would he ever be able to realize it? In all this fierce longing to be well again he had but one end in view: to start afresh upon that mad life that had reduced him to the miserable state that he was in. When he would give

way to these regrets and aspirations before Pierre, the latter would shake his head sadly and say bitterly:

"Is there anything more vain and deceiving than pleasure? And is it worth while to pursue it? Ah! the longing for success and fame.... Yes!... It is worthy of a man to give his life in the struggle to attain these, but to spend days and nights in turning over the cards or in paying court to women, can anything more ridiculous be imagined, can there be a more melancholy sight? And yet I do it, even I who am criticising that way of life so severely.... But then I am a fool, a miserable, stupid fool. Not having the energy to earn my living by honest labor, I look for it at the gaming-table. I gamble—what a shameful confession!—in order to try to win from the bank the money that is demanded from me by a worthless creature whom I despise, who deceives me, and whom I cannot summon up courage to leave.... And so it is those things that you are longing for? It is for the hours passed at the gaming-table, by the consuming heat of the gas that dries up your brain, waiting for the red or the black to turn up? And then for the moment when you can place the notes, thus dearly bought, in the itching fingers of the fair one who smiles as she counts the sum: love and calculation mixed! That is the kind of happiness that you are dreaming of! It is the same kind that I am enjoying, and I don't know whether I would not prefer death!"

He looked at his friend, terrified by this outbreak of sardonic rage, gave a mournful laugh, and went on in a calmer strain:

"After all, I am wrong in judging others by myself. You are loved, you are happy, and life has pleasures in store for you. *I* am despised, spurned, and the only joys

that I know are so bitter that the remembrance of them cuts me more cruelly than does the remembrance of my sorrows. What should I have to regret? Nothing. By whom should I be mourned? By no one. *You*, on the other hand, your life is necessary to those who love you, to your mother, to your sister. For their sake you must get well; they alone are to be considered. Ah! had I at my side one of those gentle, charming creatures whose affection consoles and heals every suffering, I should be able to recover my moral health and become a better man. In my hours of deepest dejection I have often thought that if I had some one to whom I might devote myself, I might even yet become as good a man as the best. But I am alone in the world.... To the devil with reflection! When I shall have had enough of my folly, I will split my skull upon one of those prettily colored rocks that lie at the bottom of the cliff, and the sea, like a last loving friend, shall rock my body in her cradle."

It was not in presence of his friend alone that Pierre Laurier abandoned himself to these fits of melancholy; sometimes, when with Mme. de Vignes and Juliette, he had allowed his irritation to find vent in desperate words. If at such times he had only looked at the girl, the sorrowful expression of her face would have shown him one of those reasons for making a better man of himself which he had besought from destiny. He did not, however, trouble himself about the effect that his words might produce; he was merely giving himself up sincerely to the expression of his discouragement. Foolish man! Hope, so ardently invoked by him, was glittering, a luminous star, in his dark heavens, and he would not raise his eyes toward it. He wished for a gentle, charming creature to

whom he might sacrifice his dangerous passions, and he had one close at his side, one who was moved by his grief, whose heart ached for him in his torments.

Still, notwithstanding the sadness that the black humors of her brother's friend inspired in her, Juliette did not complain of her lot. She saw Pierre harassed with anxieties, gloomy and capricious, but nevertheless she saw him. At Paris she did not see him, so that was so much gained. She knew that the wicked woman was at Monte Carlo, but she was also aware that the painter no longer spent all his time in her company. If the chain still remained unbroken, the links were giving way, and doubtless the day might come when it would part entirely. It was all that she could hope for. She had not much pride, but are we proud when we are in love?

The day succeeding the dinner which had come to such an odd ending with the story told by Doctor Davidoff, about ten o'clock in the morning, Juliette, her blond head protected by a sunshade and a little basket on her arm, was strolling along the terrace of the villa plucking flowers. The weather was delightful; at the horizon the blue of the sea melted imperceptibly into the blue of the sky; a delicious breeze was blowing inward, heavily loaded with saline odors, while the waves, fringed with silver, rolled in and died away at the foot of the rocks which bordered on the silent little bay. Jacques came out of the house accompanied by his mother, and began to walk slowly up and down in the sunshine.

Mme. de Vignes was a little, slender woman, with delicate features, expressive black eyes, and an intelligent forehead surmounted by hair that had already begun to whiten. Her face bore the calm expression of a resignation that

had become habitual. She walked along quietly beside her son without speaking, casting an occasional glance upon him, as if measuring the influence that the southern climate was exercising upon the progress of his convalescence. Jacques, when half way down the terrace, stopped, and

seating himself upon the stone parapet that was warmed by the rays of the sun, watched the strange variations of color produced by the submarine vegetation in the water of crystalline clearness. He sat there enjoying the warmth, his mind free from thought, forgetful of his illness and ex-

periencing a vivifying sensation of well-being. His sister, having finished gathering her flowers, came up to him, and giving him a gentle embrace, said:

"How do you feel this morning? Did you sleep well? It seems to me that you came in late."

The young man smiled at the recollection of his old-time frolics, which generally ended only with daybreak the following morning, and taking a spray of mimosa from his sister's basket, replied:

"Oh yes! extremely late! It was past ten o'clock!"

"You are laughing at me. But none the less it is the first time that you have been out at night since we came here."

"My doctor gave me permission. He was among the guests, and doctors never disapprove of the pleasures that they have a hand in."

Juliette was silent for a moment, then with a grave air:

"You like Doctor Davidoff, then?" she inquired.

"Yes, he is a good fellow, and his science is the genuine article, in spite of the satanic airs that he chooses to put on. I do not believe, moreover, that he is as much of a devil as he would like to appear. There is not a doubt, however, that since he has taken hold of me I am doing better."

"Thank God, my dear child!" exclaimed Mme. de Vignes. "If it were for nothing but that, he would appear to me divine. Let him be whatever he will, provided only that he restores you to health. In any event, he is a man of perfect good-breeding and his manners are of the very best; but he might be the veriest clown and I would worship him. All that I ask of him is to make you well again."

"He ought to come in this morning to see whether my small debauch of last night resulted fatally or not. Unfortunately it will be one of the last visits that he will make us: he leaves for the east in a few days with his friend and patient, Count Woreseff."

"That Russian who owns the handsome white yacht that is anchored in Villefranche road?"

"That very same Russian."

"Was he of your party last night?"

"No; he hardly ever comes ashore. It is said that he has a Circassian on board whom he carried off and whom he guards with jealous precaution, and that she is reported to be the most beautiful woman that one could imagine in his dreams. Her apartment is furnished with fabulous Oriental luxury, and the service is performed by women dressed in sumptuous costumes. When rowing around the yacht in the evening, exquisite harmonies are heard proceeding from her; it is the musicians whom the Count keeps on board for his own and his fair one's delectation. That is the man with whom Davidoff is to sail for the land of the Thousand and One Nights."

"I don't pity him," gayly said Madame de Vignes.

"He used all his powers of persuasion with Pierre again last night to induce him to accompany them. Woreseff, who adores artists, had thought of taking along a painter who might make some studies of the principal episodes of the voyage to serve as souvenirs."

"And your friend did not accept?" asked Juliette with a constrained smile.

"No; he is thinking of another voyage, so he says. But he intends to make it alone."

These words, which offered so threatening a double

meaning, were succeeded by silence. Jacques, suddenly struck by the sinister interpretation that might be put upon the expression uttered thoughtlessly by him, remained sunk in thought, calling to mind the fatal resolves that Pierre had so frequently given expression to. Juliette watched her brother with a sinking heart, divining his sensations and unable to overcome the shock that she had sustained. They both seemed influenced by the fear of impending misfortune, of which this sentence had been the terrible presage, and they were silent, beset by gloomy impressions. The sound of carriage-wheels on the Beaulieu road aroused them from their sorrowful reflections. They gave each other a last look, terrified by their pallor and their sadness, then turned their eyes toward the gate of the villa, in front of which a carriage had drawn up.

The Russian doctor, dressed in black and looking very grave, had alighted and was coming toward them. Jacques arose and, putting on a cheerful face, advanced a few steps to meet his early visitor.

"Faithful to your promise, my dear Davidoff," he said, shaking hands with his friend. "How I thank you for showing me so much attention!"

The doctor bowed to Mme. de Vignes and her daughter. His face remained expressionless and icy. Jacques looked at him with surprise, and Juliette with terror. Why this attitude of constraint, this silent greeting? What was it that he feared to say? What was the event that made it necessary for him to assume that gloomy countenance and that sombre mien? The Russian looked at Jacques, and, as if to prolong a situation that might defer painful explanations, he slowly inquired:

"You are feeling well this morning? You slept well?

You have no fever?" He took his wrist and held it between his fingers for a few seconds. "No! Your strength is coming back, and you can be treated now as if you were a man."

Jacques looked at the doctor and asked in a hollow voice:

"Is there anything happening of gravity sufficient to produce so deep an impression on me?"

Davidoff, without speaking, nodded his head affirmatively.

"And you hesitated about telling me?" continued Jacques.

"Certainly I did," replied the Russian.

"And now?"

"Now I am ready to speak." He lowered his voice a little in such a way as not to be heard by the mother and daughter. "But it is better that I should wait until we are alone."

They were all four walking slowly in the direction of the house. When they reached a point in front of the veranda that shaded the drawing-room windows, the blinds of which were partially closed on account of the sun, Mme. de Vignes and Juliette stopped. The girl looked anxiously at the doctor. It seemed to her that the obscure words that he had just uttered had some concealed connection with the ideas that were troubling her at the moment of his arrival. The image of Pierre Laurier arose before her mind's eye, and she was pale and her gaze was wandering as if she were about to sink into unconsciousness. She could not doubt that the important communication that Davidoff had to make was in some way connected with the painter. What could its nature

be? Her blood ran cold in her veins, and she felt a chill pass through her on that splendid sunny morning. She beheld the blue sky veiled in obscurity, the sea grew dark before her eyes and the eternal verdure of the pines changed color. A funeral knell rang in her ears and, a victim to her gloomy hallucination, she stood there motionless with the sensation that everything was turning about her.

Her mother's summons restored her to herself. Her eyelids rose and fell, her vision became distinct again, the sky was bright, the sea blue, and the vegetation of a luxuriant green. Nothing was changed except her heart, which was cruelly oppressed, and her spirit mortally sad.

"Are you coming, Juliette?" Mme. de Vignes repeated. "I think that your brother wishes to be alone with the doctor."

The young girl cast a supplicating look upon the Russian, as if it depended upon him whether the dreaded evil should or should not be, and with a deep sigh she entered the house.

The two men had seated themselves upon the veranda, near an iron column upon which was trained a climbing heliotrope with its clusters of odorous flowers. They remained a second hesitating before the revelation that was to be asked for and to be made. Then Jacques, with the indifference of a sick man who thinks only of himself, asked in a calm voice:

"Pray, what is the matter, my dear friend?"

"It is sad news, oh! very, very sad, that I have to impart to you. I learned it only this morning, and I confess that I am still quite upset. Were it not that it is necessary that you should be informed, I would have de-

ferred my painful mission, but you are so directly involved in the occurrence. . . . "

Jacques, who had all at once become very nervous, interrupted him :

" What a preamble ! And what precautions ! How am I involved ?"

" You shall know," replied Davidoff, directing upon his patient a look so searching as almost to be stern. " Last night, about one o'clock, a tragic suicide occurred in the immediate vicinity of Monte Carlo. A man threw himself from the cliff into the sea. Some coast-guardsmen, in making their rounds, found his overcoat, his hat, and a scrap of writing—which is addressed to you."

" To me ?" exclaimed Jacques, growing very pale.

" To you. . . . The things were all taken to the governor, who, knowing the friendship that exists between us, caused me to be notified so that I might decide as to the best manner of imparting the information to you."

Jacques' eyes had suddenly sunk in his head and his lips had contracted as if under the effect of a spasm of intense pain ; panting for breath, he asked :

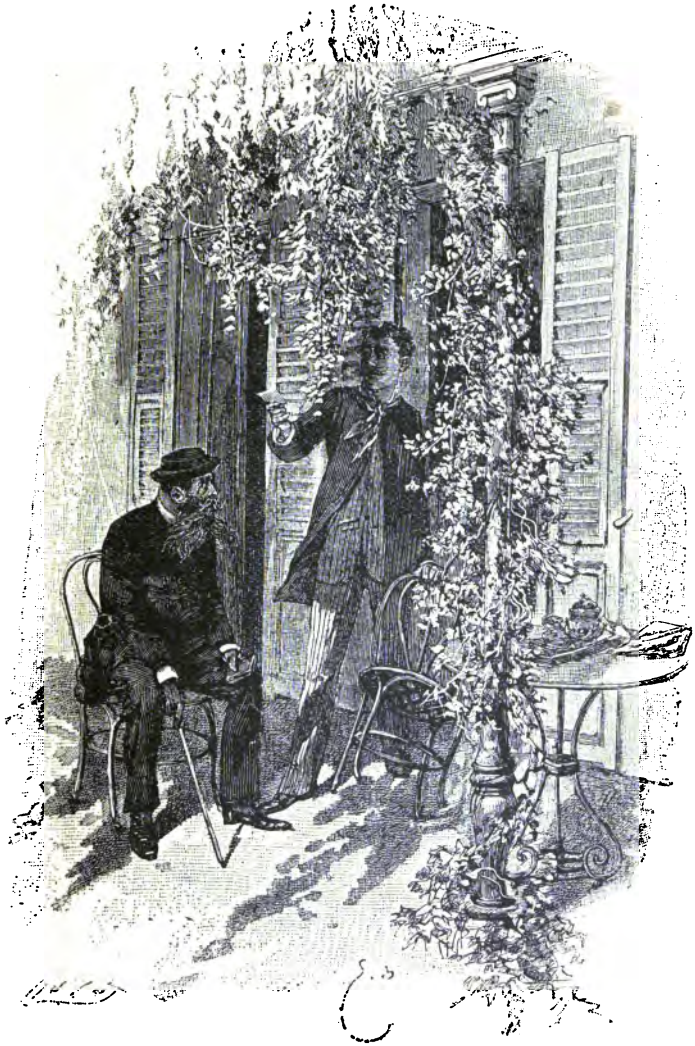
" Then it is some one . . . who is very near to me ?"

" Yes—very near."

Davidoff slowly took from his pocket-book the card upon which the painter had written his last farewell and handed it to the young man. The latter took the small square of pasteboard as if it inspired him with fear and read the name that was engraved on it ; his cheeks flushed burning red, and he exclaimed :

" Pierre ! . . . Pierre ! . . . Can it be possible !"

He stood there as if deprived of the power of motion, his gaze fixed upon the Russian, who watched him in turn,



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silent, motionless, dark of look. They did not speak, as if they dreaded to hear the sound of their own voices. They exchanged a glance that was full of doubt and horror, such a stupor of incredulity was produced in them by the disappearance of this man who, only a short while before, had so abounded in health and strength. And yet it was so. They would look upon Pierre no more. His place at their side was vacant forever.

Without uttering a word Jacques turned his eyes again upon the card, of which he had only read the name, and dashing away with the back of his hand the tears that filled his eyes, he commenced to read the last farewell words that his friend had addressed to him. With difficulty he deciphered the tremulous writing, traced with a pencil in the darkness of the night; as he read, an irresistible tenderness choked his voice. He felt that Pierre was weary of his suffering and his degradation, and that he had chosen to die in order to make his escape from it all, but he saw, too, that his friend in disappearing from earth had thought to conclude with destiny that strange bargain which would, perhaps, allow him to live again in the person of Jacques. He slowly read:

"I am about to make another trial in my own person of the experience that Davidoff told us of. . . . I bequeath my soul to you. Live and be happy through me and for my sake."

At the same moment that a sob rose to his lips, the look of the sick man brightened with a ray of hope. He was distracted by grief, but at the bottom of his heart a vivifying belief was already springing into birth.

"I was the last one to look upon him," said the Russian doctor. "He parted from me to go to Clémence

Villa's. A violent scene, such as happened between them daily, must have taken place. He went out again, and since that time no one knows what became of him. Smugglers occupied the attention of the coast-guards on the Vintimille road all the night. Shots were exchanged, and it is near the place where the skirmish occurred that the coat, the hat, and the card were found."

"And his body?" inquired Jacques.

"The waves will doubtless bring it to the beach. Thus his friends will be enabled to give it a Christian burial and will know where to go to weep over it."

At this moment a hollow groan, followed by the noise of a falling body, was heard in the drawing-room. Jacques and the doctor arose in affright. Davidoff stepped forward hurriedly, drew the blinds and uttered an exclamation. Juliette was lying senseless upon the floor near the window. She had ineffectually endeavored to support herself by a chair, which she had upset and carried down with her in her fall. As she lay there, pale and with closed eyes, she looked as if she were dead

The two men rushed into the house. The commotion had brought Mme. de Vignes to the scene. There was no necessity for her to ask any questions; she had seen her daughter through the open door. To raise the inanimate form in her arms was the work of a second for this woman of such frail appearance; she laid her upon a sofa, looked into her face, felt her heart, assured herself that she was alive, and then, somewhat reassured, asked her son:

"What has happened?"

Davidoff had approached the young girl and was bathing her temples with cold water. Jacques did not show

his mother the note which, as by a superhuman testament, bequeathed to him the soul of his friend ; he only uttered these words:

"Pierre is dead."

It seemed as if Juliette had heard him from the depths

of her painful slumber. She stirred, opened her eyes, recognized those who were standing by her and, her suffering returning together with her consciousness, burst into tears.

Mme. de Vignes and her son exchanged glances, Jacques head sank upon his breast; then the mother, divining the chaste secret of Juliette's virgin love, gave a sorrowful sigh and began to weep in company with her daughter.

Davidoff took Jacques by the arm and led him outside. Upon the terrace the air was balmy, the sun was giving its warmth to the plants that filled the air with their perfume, the gentle breeze made glad the heart, the sea was of a blue like turquoise, the great swallows skimmed the waves with joyous cries. It seemed to the doctor that his patient was no longer the same man. He walked with a firm and deliberate step, not dragging his feet after him, his form was erect, his eyes, but a moment before hollow and lustreless, now sparkled with life. He did not speak, but it was manifest, from the swelling of his features, that some sudden exaltation was at work within him. Davidoff, with bitter irony, watched the metamorphosis that hope had effected in his being.

Thereupon, thinking of Pierre Laurier dead and gone and Juliette weeping, the Russian gave a silent and sardonic smile. He said to himself that it was a great deal that two lives should be sacrificed in order that this selfish young man should be restored to life, and on the beautiful terrace, beneath the charming sky, he mentally called up a young, happy loving couple, walking in the intoxicating perfume of the blooming orange trees with arms interlaced ; but the lovers fled in sudden fright and Davidoff beheld only Jacques walking triumphant at his side, already inspired with new life by Pierre's blood and Juliette's tears.

III.

WHILE Pierre was putting forth all his strength to reach the drowning man, the moon, breaking through her veil of clouds, disclosed him to the excisemen who were lying in ambush upon the cliff. Two reports, a sharp whistling sound close to his ears and a dash of foam where the bullets struck the water told him that he was taken for a smuggler. He rose on top of a big wave and cast a rapid glance about him. At ten feet distance there was a dark form struggling in the current; at two hundred mètres the boat, impelled by the utmost efforts of the rowers, was making its way toward the cutter, which was tacking in the offing. A few vigorous strokes brought him alongside the wretched man, who was struggling blindly, half choked by the waves and unable to exert himself intelligently. Pierre grasped him firmly, raised his head above the water and with his powerful voice sent out a cry which went ringing over the waves and reached the boat. At this appeal the man who held the tiller rose to his feet, looked carefully around, and perceiving the moving group on the surface of the silvery waves, answered with a shrill whistle. The oars immediately ceased to beat the water, the boat's way was checked and the cutter, as if in obedience to orders received in advance, headed for the land.

Pierre, collecting all his strength, still advanced but slowly, weighted as he was by the inert mass of the drowning man. His clothing, adhering closely to his

body, hindered the free use of his legs, and his breathing was becoming labored. Now great masses of water passed over his head and he could no longer cleave his way through the waves, lightly and vigorously, with his strong arms. It seemed to him as if some irresistible power were dragging him to the bottom and as if his heavy limbs were being bound with mysterious bonds. Rumbling noises filled his ears, and his eyes, veiled with shadows, could no longer clearly discern the sky.

He thought, "I shall never have the strength to reach the boat, and I shall die in company with this wretched man." He was seized with despair at not being able to save the unknown, whom he held in a close embrace, as if he had been a dearly loved brother. He did not think of himself; he had already made a sacrifice of his life, and he now felt a keen delight that he was not throwing it away in an absurd and cowardly suicide, but in a struggle to save a fellow-man from death.

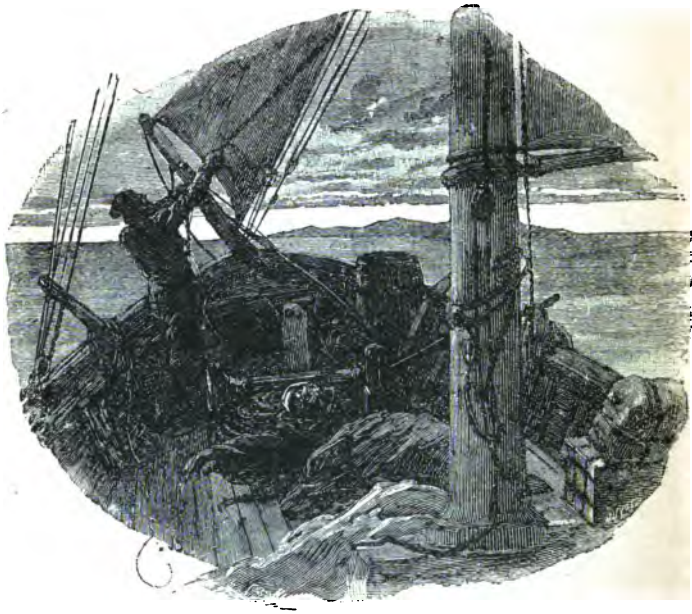
A fierce desire to conquer restored his strength; with a more strenuous effort he lifted his helpless burthen and again appeared upon the crest of the waves. The boat was not more than twenty feet away from him. His mouth, close set by the contraction of all his muscles, emitted a feeble, smothered cry; he beat the water with his arms, while his paralyzed legs remained powerless to move. A great swell came along and turned him over, and the bitter flood filled his throat, stifling a last appeal. He sank down into the green water beneath the light of the moon, with this very definite idea, that if he let go his companion, relieved of his weight he would be saved. But he rejected the selfish thought, the expression of human cowardice. He thought, "If, by abandoning him,

I could assure his safety at the expense of my own destruction, I would do it. Come, one last effort that he may not die with me." He came to the surface, drew a long, deep breath, again beheld the starry heavens, and suddenly felt himself delivered from the burthen that was drowning him. He heard a voice saying in Italian, "I have him, haul in."

At the same moment a mass, which seemed to him of enormous size, reared itself upon the waves, black as night, and fell back heavily upon him. He was conscious of a sharp pain in the forehead, his eyes saw millions of stars, it seemed to him that his form was becoming light and impalpable, and consciousness left him.

When he came to, he found himself stretched upon a bundle of sails in the bow of a small vessel that was spin-

ning along merrily in the clear, starry night. The reefed jib was snapping in the wind above his head, the sea was roaring where it was parted by the stem, and three men with sunburned faces were bending over him, watching anxiously for his waking. He endeavored to rise, but two strong arms held him down. One of the men, un-



corking a flask covered with plaited straw, offered him a drink. He swallowed a mouthful of very strong brandy, which had the effect of restoring his perception of external objects. A bruise upon the forehead reminded him of the blow under which he had fainted. He raised his hand to his face and withdrew it covered with blood. At the same time he was chilled by the night air, which

was rendered keener still by the rapid motion of the boat. Then, in a voice that was still feeble, addressing those who stood around him:

"My friends," said he, "if you wish to do me a kindness, as everything proves that you do, give me in the first place some dry clothes: I am perishing with cold."

"Hallo! the comrade is a countryman of mine," said one of the three sailors, with a strong Provençal accent. "Let me have the pleasure of sharing my wardrobe with him."

He disappeared down the hatchway and came up again in a minute with a pair of trousers, canvas shoes, a woollen shirt and a heavy cloak. He laid the things down at Pierre's side, and said with an air of satisfaction:

"Agostino will pull through all right; he is beginning to breathe. If he did not get the boat on top of his head, as you did, he swallowed a great deal more of the soup."

At these words, Pierre remembered the enormous black mass that he had seen rising on the crest of the waves a moment before he lost consciousness; he now understood that it was the small boat, lifted by the swell, which had fallen back on him with all its weight. While he was reflecting, his companions had rapidly divested him of his wet clothing and supplied its place with the dry. When this was accomplished, he found himself seated on a coil of rope, very light-headed still, but extremely comfortable in the soft woollen which warmed his aching limbs.

"Who is Agostino?" he asked, turning toward the three men, who were watching him with an air of satisfaction.

"Agostino," replied the Provençal, "is the comrade

that you swam to the boat with under the fire of the excisemen."

"And who are you, yourselves?" Pierre demanded, with a brusque air of authority.

The sailors laid their heads together hesitatingly. One of them finally said in a guttural voice, in bad Italian:

"We have no need to distrust him. Besides, what harm can he do us?"

"None at all," Pierre calmly interjected. "And even if I could injure you, I certainly have no inclination to do so."

"Aha! you understood, did you?" said the Provençal, laughing.

"Nearly. But it seems to me that your comrades talk a *patois?*"

"Yes; it is the Sardinian dialect. We are poor sailors, who try to run in without paying duty, at our own risk and peril, goods that are entrusted to us by the merchants of Leghorn and Genoa."

"Smugglers, in other words?"

"*Mon Dieu!* yes; that is the truth of it. We were just about discharging a cargo of silks, brandy and cigars, when we were disturbed right in the middle of our work by those good-for-nothing dogs of coast-guardsmen. We landed the merchandise, though, all except two bales of Virginias which went to the bottom and will be smoked by the little fishes. But you, monsieur, how was it that you happened to be there just in time to get poor Agostino out of the pickle he was in?"

It was now Pierre's turn to be embarrassed. He did not see that there was any call for him to confide to his new-found acquaintances the reason of his being at the

point named, where he had been enabled to save another man's life instead of throwing away his own. His hesitation in answering made the sailors think that he had reasons for not wishing to give an explanation of his conduct. If such was the case, they were not the kind of men to be surprised; they were, moreover, by reason of their occupation, very much disposed to habits of discretion.

"Your affairs are your own business," said the Provençal, just as the painter was getting ready to invent a fib of some sort, "and we have nothing to do with them. In place of making you talk, it would be better to attend to that wound on your forehead. It has been bleeding, and that is good for wounds on the head. A strip of linen, now, and in two days it will be all right. Would you like to go down into the cabin with our comrades?"

"If it makes no difference to you, I would prefer to remain on deck. My sea legs are not very good, and the fresh air will be of benefit to me."

"Just as you please."

A few minutes later Pierre, with his head bandaged up, was leaning over the rail of the cutter and watching the sea as it raced along the vessel's side toward the stern. There was not a sail to be seen. In the distance, in a thin fog, a revolving light flashed its rays out over the water from moment to moment. The fresh breeze came and deliciously filled the young man's lungs. Among these unknown companions he felt himself relieved of a weight that was crushing him. It seemed to him that he was not himself any longer, and that Pierre Laurier, sick and senseless, was now sleeping at the bottom of the sea, pale and inert, rocked by the ocean surges. He heaved a deep

sigh which resounded in the silence, and murmured in a low tone:

"It is true; I am dead."

"Do you want anything?" asked the Provençal, who was standing watch two steps away.

"Faith, my dear comrade, since you deal in contraband cigars you must have kept a few on board. I confess that I would like to have a smoke."

"That is easy enough." He put his head down the hatchway and uttered a few words. Presently he came back with a package tied up in yellow ribbons that he handed to Pierre. "The captain sends them to you, and he wishes me to tell you that Agostino is all right again. ... Poor fellow! If he had gone to the bottom there would have been many a tear shed in Torrevecchio."

"Where away is Torrevecchio?"

The Provençal stretched his hand out over the sea, toward the horizon. "Down there," he said, "in Corsica." He took out his flint and steel and struck a light, and holding out the burning tinder said: "Here is some fire for you."

Pierre selected a long brown cigar, lighted it carefully, and puffing out the smoke in thick clouds with keen delight, inquired: "Tell me, what port is your vessel making for now?"

The sailor shook his head. "Only the captain can tell that. We are headed for the island of Elba, but shall we turn up at Porto Ferajo or somewhere else? We shall know more about it when we get there. You had better try to get some sleep."

Pierre smiled and gave an approving nod of the head. He slowly turned his steps toward the bundle of sails on

which he had found himself lying when he recovered consciousness. He drew his woollen cloak closely about him and stretched himself at length on the sails, making use of a coil of rope for a pillow; and pulling gently at his cigar, his eyes fixed on the glittering heavens, his mind at rest and his heart free for the first time in many months, he lost himself in a reverie which gradually conducted him to the land of dreams.

When he awoke the sun was warming him, like a lizard in a hole in the wall, with his oblique beams. He had some difficulty at first in recognizing his surroundings; the sails and rigging greeted his eyes with a spectacle which they were not accustomed to behold on opening in the morning. The recollection of the events which had filled the short hours of the night quickly returned to him. His heart beat more rapidly at the thought that his accustomed life was completely overturned, and that it was impossible for him ever again to do any of those things that he had been used to do. Between his past and his present a chasm yawned, wider and deeper than the blue sea that separated the vessel he was on from the coast. And down, down at the bottom of that sea lay a corpse, that of a mad painter named Pierre Laurier, who had fallen from such a height that the fall was mortal.

Yes, mortal! He repeated this word so that there might not be the smallest possible doubt in his mind, where darkness still reigned. He had said that he would kill himself, he had written it, he had cast at his friends and his mistress this despairing and bitter cry: "I am flying from life, because you have not taught me to love it." At that moment they must be overwhelmed either with stupefaction or with melancholy. He could not show

himself again without incurring the risk of ridicule. Chance had conducted him among unforeseen surroundings, where he was absolutely unknown to all his companions; all that he had to do was to allow the blind goddess to lead him where she would.

Besides, was not this the silence, the repose, the peacefulness for which his spirit had thirsted? Oh, to come forth from the hell of an entangling and unwholesome passion and find one's self placed in the paradise of a primitive and entirely material existence! To pass from the unhealthy atmosphere of a courtesan's boudoir, from the vitiated heat of a gambling-room, to the keen, health-giving odors of this boat as she cleaved the pure air and the blue waves! His lungs were distended with the fresh breeze; it seemed to him that his chest was enlarging, and a thrill of delight ran through all his limbs. He arose, and seeing the crew collected on the deck, advanced toward his new friends with a tranquil step.

The Provençal stepped forward to meet him. "Have you slept well?" the sailor asked.

"Never better!"

"Ah! that is because the sea is such a good cradle."

"Where are we now?" Pierre inquired.

"About abreast of Leghorn. That line of white hills that you see there to the left is Viareggio.... But here comes the captain with Agostino. He wishes to thank you."

Pierre scarcely had time to collect himself; a little brown-bearded, brown-haired man with an olive complexion, lighted up by a pair of great eyes and a good-natured smile, rushed up to him, and already had him clasped in his embrace.

"You saved my life!" he exclaimed. "You may count upon me in turn; my life belongs to you."

"Very well, comrade, very well!" said the painter, gently disengaging himself. He looked at Agostino and saw that he was barely twenty years old; and placing his hand on his shoulder, he continued: "Really, you were

very young to die. It was your companions, though, who got you out of your scrape; I was on the point of drowning with you."

"That is the very thing that attaches me to you," said Agostino with warmth. "You were sinking, and still you

did not let me go. Oh! you must come with me to the country so that my mother and sister may thank you.... But what is your name?"

"Pierre."

Agostino in turn examined his preserver. "You are not a fisherman, nor a sailor, nor a working-man.... You are a gentleman."

"There is where you are mistaken; I am a working-man.... I paint for a living."

"Oh, then it must be fine and delicate painting! Perhaps men's and women's faces looking out of the false windows of villas? Perhaps signs for the shops... perhaps Madonnas at the street-corners...."

"Exactly," said Pierre. "And if I find work in your country, I will stay there for a little while."

"The Corsicans are not rich," said the captain. "If, however, you choose to give a coat of paint to the Saint Laurence at the bow of the vessel..."

"Yes, certainly, when we reach port. It will pay for my passage, unless you think the price is too small..."

The smuggler interrupted him: "It is we who are your debtors. Whatever you do for the boat, we will accept it as a mark of friendship, but we shall still be in your debt."

"That is understood, then," Pierre gayly exclaimed. "And may one know where we are going at this rattling pace?"

"To Bastia."

"Bastia is good enough," said the painter. "I have no preference. Provided only we don't reach the mainland, all will be well."

"Is there a necessity, then, for your taking the air far from France?" asked the captain with a strange smile.

"A very pressing necessity."

"Have you been engaged in some affair that did not turn out well?"

"A pretty bad affair ... yes, a love affair."

The smuggler's face assumed an expression of disdain, and Pierre understood that he had sunk in his esteem; but although he had only succeeded in getting himself set down as a half rascal, he already felt himself more at ease among his shipmates. He thought: "Here I am, like Salvator Rosa among the brigands, but is the society of the men around me any worse than that of those with whom I used to shake hands every day? All that is changed is the language and the costume. Besides, these folks are more amenable to generosity and gratitude than my friends of yesterday; the heart of these is more simple and more upright than that of the others, and these scamps who have all done something to deserve imprisonment, and some of them, perhaps, the galleys, are less rotten, less eaten by gangrene, than those with whom I was accustomed to associate habitually."

He was strengthened by this bitter philosophy and faced his new situation with tranquillity, almost with satisfaction. He no longer thought of dying; he had no reason to call down imprecations on life. It was furnishing him with unlooked-for sensations which excited his active imagination. Variable and impressionable by nature, as prompt to give way to enthusiasm as to despair, his artistic temperament in an instant came to the front in seductive conceptions that threw his recent cares and troubles into the background. It was rest and contentment, not

anxiety and constraint, that this change of circumstances afforded him. It seemed to him as if he had just made his escape from a prison in which he had been vegetating for long months. He enjoyed his independence, his restored freedom. His eyes, refreshed and more sensitive, as it were, were struck by a thousand details that would have escaped them the day before. He was delighted by the green hue of the waves with their fringe of silvery foam. He studied the gradual change of tone in the coloring of the sky, from an intense blue at the zenith to an opaline gray at the horizon. The light spars of the vessel, the rigging, the red sails outlined on this light background, the silhouette of a sailor seated outboard on the boom, all this living picture attracted his attention and was the source of most delicious pleasure.

Scarcely was he freed from the bondage of the woman who had been his evil genius when his art claimed him for her own again, and with a wonderful faculty of disengagement, he already retained only a very faint memory of her who had tortured him. His unwholesome love had disappeared from his heart as a consequence of that violent moral shock, as a rotten fruit falls from the branch after a night of storm.

He lighted one of the long Virginias that the Provençal had given him the night before, and leaning on the rail, he allowed his eyes to wander over the calm sea that was enlivened by a few fishing-boats flitting to and fro and by the great steamers, trailing their plumes of black smoke behind them, on their way to Civita Vecchia or Naples. The wind, freshening in the sails, sent the cutter along at a good pace, and already in the misty dis-

tance lofty mountains were beginning to appear in the bright sunlight.

Pierre called to Agostino, and pointing to the horizon, inquired: "What is that country, there, in front of us?"

"Corsica," replied the sailor in his rough voice. "The mountains that you see run from the point of Centuri to Bonifacio. The little island to the left that almost joins the mainland is Giraglia; we shall have to pass between its battery and Cape Corso to-night in order to reach Bastia. Were it not for the sea-fog, you would be able to distinguish the snow on Mount Calvo.... But it is a fine country,... you will see. And then there is no monopoly of tobacco, as there is in France, and they have free trade there;... not to mention that what is prohibited is permitted all the same!... But they are getting breakfast ready; you must be hungry."

"Faith, I am."

"Well, come along with me."

A very primitive table was spread in the bow on some empty boxes. There were bread, ham, apples, a Gorgonzola cheese, and white wine in flasks.

"Take a seat, sir," said the captain, motioning Pierre to a place near his own, "and help yourself."

The cheer was appetizing, and the painter did honor to it. While he was eating he observed that his companions remained silent. "Do I interfere with your talking?" he suddenly asked. "I should be very sorry...."

The captain looked at him calmly. "No; but we live together all the time, and have not very much to say to one another. And then the sea does not permit much conversation: it does all the talking. It is a great chatterbox, and the sailor listens to it."

The others nodded in sign of their approval. Then Pierre, pouring some wine into a tin goblet and raising it as high as his face, said :

" To your health, my friends."

They raised their cups and gravely replied :

" To your health."

After drinking some very hot coffee and some excellent rum, without lingering further at table each one got on his feet and went about his work. The day passed with incredible rapidity, and at evening the cutter entered the port of Bastia.

The next morning the health officer came and examined the papers of the little vessel and the crew were at liberty to land. Agostino, attaching himself to Pierre, made him take a seat at his side in the bow of the small boat. He seemed to be doing the honors of his country. He pointed out the different localities of the city : the Place Saint-Nicolas, which overlooks the sea, the Boulevard de la Traverse, the rich and populous quarter, the convent of Saint-Roche on the heights, the citadel and the ruins of ancient donjons that had been cannonaded and burned during the wars with the Genoese. Encircling this amphitheatre of houses, which reached from the beach half way up the mountain-side, were verdurous and flowery gardens, where orange trees and mimosas gave their delicious perfume to the air. Above the city was the thicket, that short, dry vegetation that covers the slopes of all the mountains in Corsica and constitutes what is called the *maquis:* broom, heath, juniper trees, lentiscus and small pines, all finding upon the rock just sufficient earth to cover their roots, and affording an almost impenetrable cover for game, and also for the

bandits. Away up upon the summits were splendid beech woods, the wealth of the country, ravaged by the inhabitants, who carry away the wood, and destroyed by the shepherds, who burn them to make clearings for pasturage.

All these things Agostino told his preserver as the boat was passing along the Môle du Dragon on its way to the landing-place. They disembarked at the foot of the stairs, and Pierre, a little light-headed still, found himself once more on terra firma. He was still wearing his cloak and his coarse woollen trousers and was shod with his canvas shoes. From his other clothing, which had been quite ruined by the sea-water, he had taken only his money and his watch. He looked at himself in the window of a wine-shop that stood on the quay and saw that his dress, together with the bandage that encircled his forehead, gave him the appearance of a regular brigand. He seized Agostino by the arm and stopped him.

"Where are you going at such a rate?" he inquired.

"To get some breakfast, in the first place," said the young man, "and then forward to the village. We have a week's rest while waiting for another cargo."

"Well, come and breakfast with me, and afterwards you will tell me where to find a good inn."

"Are you not going to accompany me to the country?" said Agostino in a tremulous voice. "I had promised myself that you would go and let my mother embrace you."

"I shall be very glad to go with you," Pierre replied, laughing, "but don't you remember that I promised the captain to repaint his Saint Laurence? A thing said is a thing done!"

"That is right," said Agostino, cheerfully. "But how long time is your work going to require?"

"All the forenoon of to-morrow."

"So that to-morrow afternoon you will be ready to go with me?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Then I will wait for you. I will go right away and secure Father Anton's gig; you will make the journey more comfortably in that way."

"Very well, that is settled."

They entered the inn of Santa Maria, where Agostino was favorably known on account of the excellent eatables that he smuggled in for them every month from Greece or Italy.

When seated in the chamber on the first floor, Pierre, for the first time in three days, was able to put aside the fascination of his strange adventure, look matters squarely in the face and reflect upon the best course for him to pursue. On the one hand the idea of returning to France inspired him with a feeling of deep disgust, and on the other he had it very much at heart not to hurt Agostino's feelings. Everything, therefore, conspired to keep him in the country. And then, too, the charm of this picturesque island had its influence on him. All his surroundings were calculated to captivate him: the scenery, wild and at the same time attractive, the primitive manners of the inhabitants, finally the mystery of his own incognito, which would allow him to live for as long a time as he might desire among the lower classes, such interesting objects of study in this land where the very beggars have the proud airs of great noblemen. Merimée came up before his recollection, with wild Columba's poetic form

and the fierce hatred of the Baricini, and it seemed to him that he was carried back two centuries, to that Corsica that was divided, as it was in those days, by the rancor of

its rival parties and feverishly agitated by the memories of its bloody vendettas.

He passed the afternoon wandering about the streets

of the city, quite alone, for Agostino, with praiseworthy discretion, had left him to himself. There was not a moment that he felt the time hang heavy on his hands. The movements of the sedate and dignified populace, the pic-

turesque attire of the country people, who had come in to market, almost all of them armed with a musket, the dark clothing of the women, surmounted by the black

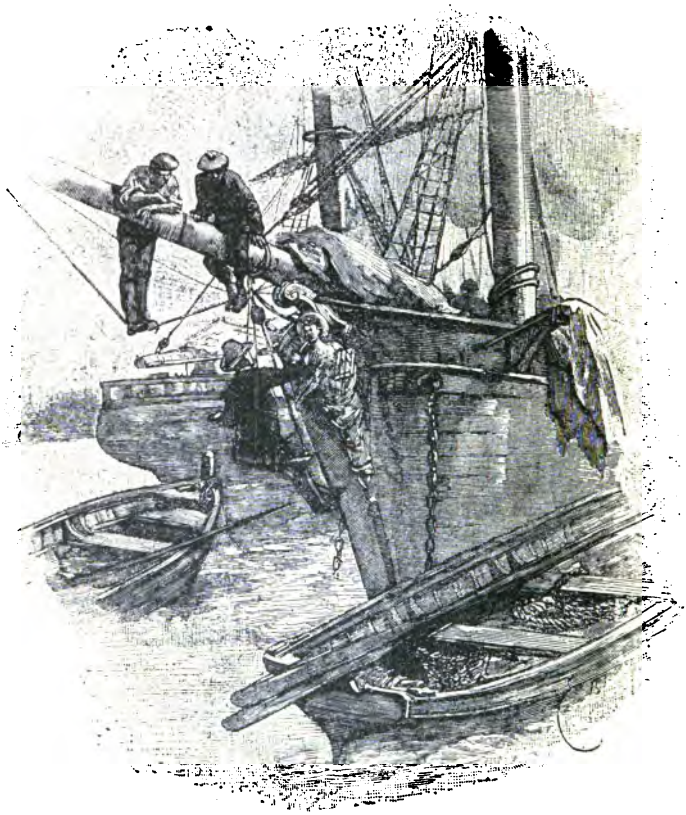
mezzaro, as if they were in mourning, everything charmed and delighted him.

He went into a tailor's shop and bought a complete suit of brown velvet, similar to the costume of a Calabrian brigand, for he could not with decency continue to wear his cloak, his sailor's trousers, and his canvas shoes. At a dealer's in artist's materials in the Traverse he found a painter's box and some canvases of different sizes, and with his mind at rest as to how he should henceforth employ his time in the land of Bonaparte, he made his way back to his inn. He dined in company with Agostino, took a walk about the port, went to bed at nine o'clock and slept a dreamless sleep.

The sun, shining through his window, awoke him. He jumped out of bed and dressed, and then, with his box under his arm, went down to the cutter. For a few sous a rowboat put him on board the little vessel that was riding at her two anchors, and at the bow of which a broad plank, fastened to the bowsprit by a couple of ropes, formed a kind of staging in front of the painted image of the saint who was the patron of the boat.

Conducted by the captain, and assisted to his position by the crew, Pierre immediately set himself to his task. While he was coloring the coarse image of carved wood, two sailors, hanging from the rigging overhead, watched him admiringly. The colors beneath his brush came out with startling brilliancy, the face assumed an appearance of life, the eyes shone, the outstretched arm seemed to command the waves. At ten o'clock the work was finished; and attended by a new description of respect, inspired by his talent, Pierre breakfasted for the last time with his companions of a day. Toward noon he went

ashore, escorted by all the crew, and after shaking hands with those to whom he owed more than life, mounted, in company with Agostino, into a kind of corricolo and left



Bastia behind a fast-trotting horse with streaming mane and tail.

After leaving the bounds of the city the road winds between enclosures planted with grapevines, past fields of

olives and between little groves of eucalyptus and holm-oak. The ground is sandy and the temperature extremely mild. The water-courses, coming down from the mountains, lose themselves in the level lands and form ponds covered with reeds, broad verdant plains, over which fly flocks of ducks and wild geese. The road runs half way up the hill-side, skirting the shore, passing through an infrequent village here and there. Agostino, urging his horse to a lively gait, explained to his companion the manners and customs of the country, giving way to an expansion and a jollity that formed a striking contrast to the gravity that he maintained on board. He was like a school-boy enjoying his vacation.

"You will see how rich our country is!" he said. "We are not lazy tenders of cattle. Torrevecchio has quite a commerce of its own.... My father used to sell his wine, and our vineyard is a large one; my brother-in-law cultivates it now and has the management of it. My mother and my youngest sister live in a little hamlet near the city. They have enough to live on, and I do not allow them to want for anything. Oh, they will be very fond of you when they come to know what you did for me!"

The painter smiled at the thought of the grateful affection of these poor folks. He said to himself: "I shall not long be a burthen on them; I shall soon make myself independent. After a day passed in the village, a guide will conduct me over the mountain, for there is no use in fixing myself permanently in the low countries by the sea-shore; I must see the wild parts of Corsica, the country of the maquis and the bandits. If there are any sketches to be made, it will be in the direction of Bocognaro, the holy land of the vendetta.... I have twenty

louis in my portemonnaie, and in my pocket-book a thousand-franc note, salvage from the wreck; it will be more than I shall need to support me for some months in this primitive country, among these folks who have no wants. ... And when my money is all gone, there will remain my profession—I will daub portraits in a single sitting at a hundred sous each—that will bring my youth back to me again!"

The vehicle, having crossed the bridge of San Pancrazio, was rolling along a steep road between two rows of chestnut trees. The sun was descending below the horizon, tinting the mountains purple with his dying fires. Agostino turned into a little country road, whistling merrily, like the blackbirds of his country. After proceeding a few hundred mètres, he stopped before the fence of an enclosure and jumped down from his seat. A great dog, who came running up barking ferociously, tangled himself up in the young man's legs with howls of delight, while an elderly woman and a young girl appeared in the orchard and came forward with open arms. Agostino embraced them effusively and pushed them forward toward his preserver, explaining his adventure in Corsican patois with a volubility that had no equal on earth. Pierre, having been thanked, caressed, carried away by the whirlwind of exuberant joy of these good people, hugged by the mother and daughter, licked by the dog, at last found himself in the house, which was extremely simple but admirable in its neatness, seated at the family table and filled with a tranquil satisfaction to which, for months past, he had been a stranger.

He went to bed early, after thanking his kind hosts. He arose late the next morning, breakfasted, looked

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around the farm, made acquaintance with Agostino's brother-in-law, who was a famous hunter, with his sister, who was a good housewife, and played with little Marietta, who had been watching him with her sharp black eyes since the preceding evening and smiling at him with her white teeth, but never approaching him without a display of wild timidity. Evening was surprisingly quick in coming, and he had accomplished nothing except enjoying the animal pleasure of living. When he was alone in his bedroom, stretched upon a mattress of fresh corn-husks, before going to sleep, he laughed at himself:

"I am leading here the admirable life of the shepherds," he thought, "and I am about to give myself a new heart and a new brain. What would my friends and companions say if they saw me given over to this idyl? Well! they would say that the Madonna, in whom all those about me here believe so unquestionably, has visibly protected me. Pierre Laurier, you were in a bad way, my boy. You have got out of it by a miracle. Profit by the favor that Providence has shown you, enjoy the time which is yours, and use it profitably by working industriously, which, until now, you have seldom had the opportunity of doing. You are treated better than you deserve... be grateful."

In the midst of these sage reflections he fell asleep and dreamed that he was painting a picture in which the evil angel had the charming and diabolical features of Clémence Villa, and the good angel, the pure countenance of Mademoiselle de Vignes. Then the image of Jacques, with his blond hair and melancholy eyes, appeared upon the canvas and became fixed there. Clémence approached the young consumptive and whispered to him

with animation; gradually she enwrapped him in her arms, taking possession of him, and the sick man grew pale, his eyes became deeper set and more sombre, his lips more livid. Then the painter's eyes, turning upon Juliette, beheld her sad, mortally sad, her hands joined in the attitude of prayer, and it was not for her brother that she was praying: another name came to her lips, and Pierre divined that it was his own. He wished to hasten to her, reassure her, console her, but Jacques' arm was extended between them like an obstacle, and from his lips fell these words:

"You gave me your soul; you can no longer call yourself your own. You have no right to reappear."

Then Pierre drew back and the picture gradually faded away, and soon he could only distinguish little Marietta, with her wild countenance and her black hair, tending her goats in the pasture shaded by old chestnut trees. The night passed in these feverish visions, but in the morning Pierre's calmness returned to him and he went away on a hunting excursion with Agostino and his brother-in-law. Thus the time slipped away, and at the end of the week the sailor declared that it was necessary for him to go on board his vessel. He would be away three weeks, and expected to find his preserver there on his return, he said.

Pierre's position in Agostino's family was now the same as if he were in his own home. These humble peasants manifested toward him a sincerity of affection such as he had not often met with. He had only a half-formed desire to go away; he therefore allowed himself to be persuaded and remained. He commenced the portrait of the little goat-herd, and amidst this tranquillity and this

magnificent scenery his reconquered inspiration had blossomed out in all its freshness and with added grace and power. He worked steadily every day until four o'clock, and after dinner the brother-in-law and his wife would come in, when he spent the evening in their company.

The mayor of Torrevecchio, a rabid Bonapartist, having heard that a painter was staying in the country, had come, accompanied by his *curé*, to try to prevail on Pierre to restore the paintings in the church ; they dated back to the time of the Genoese occupation, had emanated from the brush of some Italian master and were quite remarkable. Laurier had accepted the commission, and not satisfied with retouching the damaged portions of the mural paintings in the little church, he had also undertaken the decoration of the chapel of the Virgin, which had just been newly reconstructed.

Absorbed in his labors, hunting, fishing, not having a moment of spare time, he had regained such complete mastery over himself that it never occurred to him to think of the past. He would have blushed with shame had any one told him that one balmy night when the breeze brought comfort with it, when the murmuring sea and the resplendent heavens bore witness to the universal harmony, a certain Pierre Laurier had determined to take his life for the wicked eyes of a woman who was torturing him to death. He would have shrugged his shoulders, lighted his pipe, and sworn that in all the world there was only one thing that was worth a serious effort, and that was the hope of succeeding in giving its proper value to a figure seen in the light of the open air. And he winked his eye as he looked over his palette at little Marietta, who posed proudly, seated on a

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chestnut log in the garden, her feet on the green grass, her dog lying at her feet.

Agostino returned from a run to Leghorn, remained a few days, then went away again. Pierre seemed acclimated and said nothing further about going away. He

had purchased at Bastia such articles of furniture as were wanting in the house, the arrival of which had aroused the burning curiosity of the people in the hamlet. Every one recognized the difference in social condition that existed between the painter and his entertainers. The mayor and the curé had declared that Pierre was a superior man. His manners bespoke the dweller in great

cities, his generosity denoted wealth. Who could he be? Pierre was evidently only a Christian name. Was he keeping himself in hiding? and for what reason?

The mayor, impelled by curiosity, proceeded quietly to make an inquiry. The préfet of Ajaccio had already been informed by the sous-préfet of Bastia that a mysterious person from the mainland was living with an humble family at Torrevecchio, that he had done some remarkable work in the church, that everything in his conduct and mode of life evinced the most perfect respectability, but that it might be of interest, nevertheless, to be assured of his identity. The administration went about the matter in a less formal manner, and simply ordered the police of Bastia to request the stranger to furnish his papers.

Fortunately the officer took it into his head to go to the mayor's office and tell the mayor the object of his errand. The latter, seeing his proceedings terminate in a brutal intrusion of public force into the life of the man whom he held in particular esteem, gave the officer, who could not avoid doing as he had done, a sound rating, sent him back to headquarters with a nice letter for the préfet, and saved Pierre, who was working away in all the candor of his soul, the sight of the police. And so they still remained in ignorance of the person with whom they had to deal.

Pierre had been at Torrevecchio about two months, occupying himself with hunting, fishing and working, and had not only completed Marietta's portrait and the paintings in the church, but two *genre* pictures as well, when, one day while he was away visiting the silver-mines over toward Calvi, a carriage coming

from Bastia set down at the inn of Torrevecchio two travellers, accompanied by their servants, who called for breakfast. The proprietor, when questioned as to what objects of interest there were in the village, mentioned the paintings in the church. The younger of the

two travellers, whom his companion styled Doctor, went there alone. He stopped in front of a Resurrection, which he examined with close attention, and as the curé just then happened to be passing through the nave, he called him to him and said:

"You have there, Monsieur le Curé, a work of great merit from the hand of a Frenchman, for certainly the painter who did this work is not an Italian?"

"Truly, monsieur," said the priest, "he is a Frenchman."

"What is his name?"

"I do not know."

"Ah!" said the doctor, "he has remained unknown?"

"But he lives here," the curé continued, "and . . ."

The doctor looked surprised, and said with eagerness:

"He has been living here about two months, then?" The stranger seemed to be making a mental calculation, and said to himself in a whisper: "It is possible!" Then in his natural voice: "Do you not at least know his Christian name?"

"Yes, monsieur; his name is Pierre."

"Then he has chestnut hair, blue eyes, a blond mustache and is of middle height?" the stranger eagerly inquired.

"A blond mustache? No," said the priest, "he wears a full beard; but he has blue eyes and is not very tall."

"It is he! It is he himself!" the doctor exclaimed. "Besides, there is no one else who could have painted this Resurrection."

"You know this young man, monsieur?" the priest interrupted. "Oh, if you would only tell us. . . !"

"Who he is? I cannot do that, since it is his choice to remain unknown; but I have the right to say to you that the man who did this work is one of the ornaments of the French school. But I will see him. . . . Where is he?"

"He is absent for a few days."

"And we have to leave to-morrow! Never mind; I

must let him know that I have been here." He took the pencil from his memorandum-book, and as he was about to write on the whitewashed wall, turned to the priest and said: "You have no objections, Monsieur le Curé?"

"Do as you will, monsieur," the other replied.

Thereupon the stranger traced these simple words under the Resurrection painted by Pierre: *Et idem resurrexit Petrus*, and beneath he signed his name, DAVIDOFF; then turning to the curé, he said: "When he returns, show him this inscription; he will understand its meaning."

He made his salutation to the priest, returned to the inn, and said to his companion:

"My dear Count, you made a mistake in not coming out with me; you missed a very curious circumstance."

"What was that?"

"I will tell you when we are on board again. In this place it is a secret."

The two travellers lighted their cigars, called for their carriage, and took their departure.

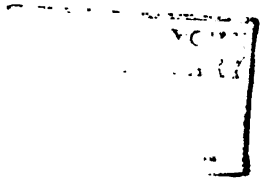
The second day after this Pierre returned from his excursion with Agostino's brother-in-law; he brought back a handsome pair of silver earrings for Marietta, and a belt and clasp for the mother. He made a good breakfast, and was preparing to go to work, when the Curé pushed open the screen door and entered the room.

"Ah! it is Monsieur le Curé," exclaimed Pierre. "To what do we owe the pleasure of your visit?"

"A message for you with which I have been entrusted."

"Indeed! From whom?"

"A stranger."



Pierre's face darkened, and in a rather unsteady voice he said: "Let us see, please, what it is all about."

"If you will go with me to the church, you will learn more quickly and more fully there."

"I am at your service."

He took his hat and went out with the priest; on the way he did not speak a word. As they were approaching the main square, the Curé said:

"This stranger saw your paintings, and he told me that you have enriched our church with a work of inestimable value."

Pierre made no reply, but shook his head carelessly; he hurried forward, as if anxious to learn with whom he had to deal. He crossed the nave, came to his Resurrection, and with an emotion that he could not restrain read upon the wall the inscription: *Et idem resurrexit Petrus...* DAVIDOFF. He sighed, repeated in a husky voice, "Davidoff," and stood lost in thought.

The curé, behind him, broke the silence, translating the Latin sentence:

"*Peter, also, is risen.* Then there has been divine intervention in your case? My son, you should give thanks to God."

Pierre passed his hand across his forehead, smiled at the priest, who was watching him with a face expressive of wonder, and in a deep voice said:

"Yes, there has been divine intervention in my case. . . . And God be praised for it."

He again gave himself up to his reflections, seemingly revisiting his past, then gently said:

"Monsieur le Curé, I thank you for the trouble you have taken; what you have shown me is of great interest

to me. *Au revoir*, M. le Curé." And with bowed head and lingering step he returned to the house of Agostino's mother.

The next day one of the boys who served mass brought him a letter posted at Ajaccio with this address: "M. Pierre, through the kindness of M. le Curé of Torrevecchio." He opened it with a sinking heart; it contained these lines:

"My dear friend: You are still of this world; I could not have experienced a more agreeable surprise. It was I who took upon myself the painful duty of conveying to Beaulieu the note in which you announced your fatal resolution, which has happily remained unexecuted. He to whom you gave your soul, by a miracle of mental suggestion or by a sudden revival of confidence, feels that he has a new lease of life and is much better, but a person who is very near to him came near dying on account of your death. In the depths of your retreat, know that you were very near to happiness without being aware of it, but that it is still possible to regain it. Sincerely your friend,

"DAVIDOFF."

Having read the letter, Pierre folded it, put it in his pocket and left the house. Thoughtfully he followed the Bastia road and came out at a point facing the sea. Calm and blue it lay beneath the sun, stretching as far as the eye could reach. In the distance boats were sailing to and fro in the ardent light, so slowly that they scarcely seemed to move. The young man seated himself on a fragment of rock, and as on the evening when he had determined to kill himself, reflected.

Little by little Jacques' face reproduced itself in his

memory, and it was no longer pale and sombre; the brilliancy of youth and the joy of health shone in all his features; he was going about, strong and well, passionately enjoying life. He was walking, with an air of exuberant vitality, upon the terrace of the house at Beaulieu, among the reviving verdure. All things in nature were awaking at the first warm breath of spring, and Jacques, more vigorous than the plants, more blooming than the flowers, was resplendent with a new beauty. Suddenly Juliette appeared at his side, and now it was she who was emaciated and melancholy. Her charming eyes were surrounded by black circles, her cheeks had lost their roundness and her smile had the distressing gentleness of a last farewell.

Pierre shuddered to the very depths of his being. It seemed to him that the young girl's sorrowful look, turned constantly upon the sea, was seeking upon the blue waves traces of him which she was unable to find. He beheld her wasting away with grief for the loss of him, this child whose love he had divined for a moment and then cast aside. He heard a voice whispering in his ear: "It is you who are the cause of her tears, her suffering, and her decline. You were told of it: she is dying on account of your death. You had only to speak a word and this chaste heart, where your image is enshrined, would have opened itself to you; it would have been peace secured, happiness assured; through your own fault you have lost them. Why do you tarry to regain them? Will you allow her who weeps for you to go down into the cold grave? You have only to appear before her, she will revive. Come! Up and begin your life anew! Your future is in your hands, since you have her love."

A sob rose to his lips and tears trickled from his eyes,

the first that he had shed since those shameful ones that Clémence Villa had extorted from him. But not for long did he give way to this weakness. He determined to probe the very bottom of his heart and question what was there. Had his austere retirement purified and regenerated him? Did he feel himself capable of leading a new life? Would he be able to resist temptation should it be placed before him? He shuddered. A pale, brown face with shining eyes and red lips had appeared before him. She laughed, a sardonic laugh, as she had done on the evening when he made up his mind to die. Why was she laughing thus, with her white teeth and the little dimples at the corners of her mouth? Was it at him? Did she believe herself certain of bringing him back to her feet whenever she might take the fancy? Was he, then, still her slave?

He was afraid. His weakness had been so great, his follies so disastrous, so utter his cowardice, so deep his degradation! A cold sweat came out upon his forehead and his heart throbbed with anguish at the thought of again falling into the power of that cold and cruel courtesan; a second time he looked death in the face and decided that it would be preferable to such abjectness. He mournfully declined his head upon his two open hands, and in the splendor of the dying day, in the midst of the grandeur and serenity of this tranquil scenery, he remained facing the sea, reflecting.

Gradually his thoughts became clarified, and he who had not prayed since childhood, beholding himself so lonely, sad, and forsaken, raised his eyes toward Heaven. He asked nothing for himself; whatever might be his fate, however hard and wretched it might be, he accepted it

unreservedly; but was not this pure and gentle child innocent, and was it not fitting that she should be spared? For her he solicited hope and implored an alleviation of her suffering. Since the happiness was his of being loved by her, at least might she be granted strength to wait until his heart was purified of its stains. Could celestial justice refuse him this grace? He was so carried away that in the loneliness of the place he uttered his words of supplication aloud.

Suddenly his attention was attracted by an occurrence which instantaneously symbolized his hopes and fears. From a point of rocks that ran out into the sea at his feet a turtle-dove had flown forth in affright, and a golden eagle was soaring above her in pursuit. She was flying with all the speed that she was capable of, but the fierce plunderer was gaining on her, sending forth a piercing cry at every stroke of his powerful wings. Pierre was struck by the occurrence, and said to himself: "It is an omen. If the bird of prey is victorious, it means that all is lost for Juliette and myself; if the dove escapes, it means that I am to hope, to strengthen myself so as to appear again before her, worthy of happiness."

From the moment when he had thus clearly formulated the problem of his destiny he ceased to breathe, following with an eager eye the struggle of the two birds. The eagle had stooped, he was now flying almost above the dove, threatening her with his keen beak and livid talons. In her terror, the poor bird directed her course toward a little grove of holm-oaks, hoping to find concealment there, but her fierce enemy, divining her intention, accelerated his speed. Pierre, with sinking heart and trembling hands, would fain have given of his strength to aid

the turtle-dove; he saw the moment approaching when she must fall. Already the murderer was about to seize his victim, when a thin cloud of white smoke arose above the trees of the grove, and at the same time a dull report was heard. The eagle had received his death-wound; he

fell to the ground, turning over and over, while the dove disappeared in safety among the foliage.

Pierre uttered an exclamation of delight; thus the response to his request had been immediate and startling. Destiny had manifested its intervention in a manner that there was no denying. The invisible hunter, too, whose

ball had solved the question, had he not been led to that spot in order to put an end to his torments? But by a sudden return of his old-time scoffing nature, he began to laugh at the idea that a musket-shot, fired at a bird, could settle so many things. He shook his head and said:

"Work, work: therein lies the true remedy. Ever since I gave it up, I have been lost. I have devoted myself to it afresh, and it will be my salvation."

The sun was going down into the sea, red as a huge furnace. Pierre arose, and with a heart at rest returned to the village.

IV.

IT was the first Sunday of the carnival, and the Casino of Nice, brilliantly illuminated, had opened its doors for the grand *veglione.* In the Place Massèna, watching the

maskers as they entered the building, there was a throng of sight-seers massed about the burlesque throne on which for the two preceding days King Carnival had sat in solemn state, attired in his bespangled robes and holding in his hand the sceptre, emblem of the reign of folly.

The orchestra was roaring with the full power of all its brasses, and the rhythm of waltzes and quadrilles came out through the open windows in joyous gusts, mingled with the buzz and murmur of the crowd which rolled its waves hither and thither in the immense structure, devoted for the whole of that night to caprice and fancy.

On entering the building the eye fell upon a forest of plants on which streamed the light of countless lamps. A rout of elegant dominos of every conceivable color, masked or with face displayed, was moving about in the great vestibule, men and women engaged in piquant intrigues in which question and answer flew fast and thick as a volley of arrows, amid shouts of laughter, while the ladies fled with coquettish slowness before the ardent pursuit of their admirers. In the main hall orchestra and parquet were floored over for dancing, as at the Bal de l'Opéra, and the boxes were devoted to conversation and gallantry. All the pretty and attractive women of Monaco, Nice, and Cannes were gathered there, the old guard and the young, ready to storm the lines of the battalion of fast men out for a night of pleasure, partially opening their satin dominos to afford a peep at dazzling shoulders and bare white arms, raising their velvet masks to show the charm of their laughing lips and the archness of their glance.

The doors of the boxes slammed, the rustling of silk was heard, and elegant forms appeared in the corridors, bevies of women on their way to the *foyer* in search of adventures. Witty sayings flew thick and fast, jests exploded like fire-crackers, and forthwith a crowd would surround the antagonists, who disguised their voices as well as they were able, so as to baffle curiosity, while at

the same time they enjoyed the pleasure of attracting attention. Little groups of young men went by, the inevitable flower in their button-hole and their brilliant dominos trailing after them like a cloak. Groups of women ran up against them, and then would follow an exchange of pleasantries.

Standing in a corner, with his back to the wall, surrounded by five or six of his friends, Prince Patrizzi was chatting, and watching the ebb and flow of the tide of masks as they streamed along the corridor. Assisted by his staff of men about town, he was engaged in guessing at the names of the women who, believing their incognito secure beneath their protecting veils of lace, were amusing themselves without restraint. He had already identified several great ladies and a certain number of pretty girls, when he uttered an exclamation of surprise:

"Hallo! If there isn't Jacques de Vignes!"

It was Jacques, in very truth, dazzling, superb, bright of complexion and clear of eye, behind him floating his blue domino which gave him the air of a gallant cavalier of the Renaissance. He came forward with outstretched hand, smiling and happy, such as those whom he advanced to meet had known him two years before, and not dejected and stooping as at the opening of the season, that evening when Doctor Davidoff had related such fantastic stories after a merry dinner-party. The resurrection was complete, triumphal, almost insolent, so ostentatiously did Jacques display his miraculously recovered, victorious youth.

"You are quite well again, Jacques?" the Prince inquired.

"Entirely so," replied the young man, "as you may see for yourself."

"Thanks to this climate that has restored you to yourself and to us, for you were a good fellow, and will be so again."

The young man settled himself against the column at the side of Patrizzi, letting his eyes wander over the motley throng that was streaming noisily by.

"I enjoy life, my dear Prince," he said with warmth. "I enjoy life as only one can who has believed that he was near losing it. You have never been seriously ill; you know nothing of the melancholy languor that generally takes possession of the mind as the bodily strength wastes away. All nature seems shrouded in black crape, so sadly and so gloomily does one look at everything. The few moments of happiness are embittered by the thought that they may be the last that will be offered for our enjoyment, and the more beautiful and peaceful are our surroundings, the more one is tempted to curse and execrate them. I have been through it all, and you may believe me: there can be nothing more cruel, more excruciating. And so now, after coming out of hell, I am in paradise. I am pleased, charmed, enchanted by everything; I have learned to know the value of happiness, and I am capable of extracting all its enjoyment. The sun appears brighter to me, the flowers have a sweeter perfume, women are more attractive... there is an awakening of my capacity for admiration going on within me, powerful and delicious. I came near dying, and it is from that point that really dates my love of life!"

"Good!" said Patrizzi, "it is a pleasure to listen to you. Your recovery was really wonderful. Now that I

think of it, what is the strange story that has been going the rounds on this subject? Did not some one make you a present of a brand-new soul? Davidoff asserted that it was not you who were living, but your friend Laurier, and he added that you were in great luck, for Pierre was one of those who live to a hundred!" The Prince let forth a peal of laughter which made Jacques turn pale and brought the perspiration out in beads upon his forehead.

"I beg you," said the young man, "say no more on that subject. Laurier was the companion of my boyhood, and it will be long ere I shall cease to feel his loss. At any rate, if I were occupying his place in life, the world would have gained nothing by the exchange, for Pierre was an artist of incomparable talent, while I am nothing but an useless drone."

As he uttered these words in an abrupt and feverish tone, Jacques' pallor had become more pronounced. Circles formed about his eyes, and his features suddenly contracted so as to bring out his cheek-bones and his teeth in bold relief. He was seized with a sort of nervous trembling, as if the fever were upon him. He bit his lips, that had become quite livid, and forced a smile to his face; but for a moment's space, instead of the cheerful appearance of a man in sound health, he presented to his friends the funereal image of one in the agonies of death. Presently, however, the blood mounted to the cheeks again, his glance became animated, the smile returned to his lips, and Jacques was again what he had been when he entered the room, dazzling and superb. It seemed to be his desire to banish some painful impression

from his mind, and taking a few steps, he exclaimed with a gayety that was rather forced:

"What a charming evening, and how well adapted for

pleasure! Outdoors all is noise and merriment, and here all is charm and seductiveness!"

As he finished speaking, a white domino, leaving the group with which she had been talking, came up and addressed him in a disguised voice:

"Charm and seductiveness, you say? Let us see how your actions will correspond with your words."

The domino cast a flashing look upon Jacques through the holes in her mask, and the young man felt a lithe arm passed through his. He made no resistance, and in a bantering tone: "So you hanker after experiences, my pretty one?" he inquired. "Well! charm me and I will seduce you. No doubt the one will be no more difficult than the other."

The domino gave him a caressing tap upon the cheek with her fan and replied: "I forgive you the impertinence in favor of the compliment!"

Jacques gave his friends a knowing smile and disappeared in the throng with his conquest.

"Well, Patrizzi, you know them all; tell us the name of the woman that carried de Vignes away from us."

"*Parbleu!* May the devil carry me off if it was not Clémence Villa!"

"It did not take her very long to forget poor Laurier," said one of those about the Prince.

"But Jacques has not forgotten him. Did you observe how badly he felt when I mentioned his friend's name? His countenance, the instant before so smiling, fresh and rosy, lost color and became quite distorted. It was horrible—it was like a death's-head with painted cheeks. Our friend Davidoff, you will remember, depicted with singular exactness the moral state of the sick man who was cured by the means of confidence. The edifice of this cure is unsubstantial, he told us in conclusion: a word would suffice to lay it in ruins. Should the passionate conviction which has served to endow Jacques with new life lose its force, he would sink again as low, or even

lower than we have ever seen him. It is a kind of witchcraft acting upon him and sustaining him. He is possessed by an idea, and that idea gives him prodigious strength."

"That is the kind of thing that assures success to charlatans, quacks, and foreign doctors with rosettes of many colors and doubtful titles, who speculate on the burning desire of sick people to be reassured."

"And then there are make-believe sick men who recover very easily, and our friend Jacques seems to be of that category."

Patrizzi shook his head gravely. "I hope so for his mother's sake," he said. His words were interrupted by loud shouts: a band of masks was pushing its way through the crowd amid exclamations and peals of laughter. The group of which the Neapolitan was the centre opened to let them pass, and each of the young men took himself off whithersoever his pleasure called him.

Jacques, with his new-found companion on his arm, had followed the corridor of the boxes, examining with curiosity the masked and hooded woman, who led him onward with a rapid step, as if she feared to be recognized and accosted. Upon reaching one of the proscenium boxes she struck two sharp blows upon the wooden door. Another woman opened for them, and, standing aside with a silent smile, allowed them to enter; then she went out, discreetly closing the door behind her.

Jacques and the domino found themselves alone in the salon behind the box. The young man approached his companion, and encircling her waist with his arm, endeavored to throw back her hood and remove her mask, but

she straightened her form with willowy flexibility, and pressing her bust against Jacques' chest and turning suddenly on her little heels with a rustle of silk, escaped from his grasp and stood at a little distance eying him defiantly, her eyes flashing through the holes in the satin and her teeth gleaming beneath the fall of lace. She was so alluring as she stood there that he darted forward and seized her again, and putting his lips to the provoking mouth with its voluptuous folds, gave her a kiss which she returned with interest. He would have retained her in this position, but a second time she slipped from his embrace, and advancing toward the front of the box, said, still in a disguised voice and threatening him with her finger:

"Be good, or I will send you back to your friends."

"How can I be good when I am with you?" he exclaimed with a smile. "Ask me to do something that is practicable; don't call on me for impossibilities."

"You must obey me, however, or I will go away and we shall see each other no more."

"And if I consent to all your exactions, we shall meet again?"

"Certainly."

She seated herself upon the sofa that was in the box and threw herself back, disclosing as she did so between her mask and her domino a neck that had the whiteness of ivory, and beneath the lace of her hood an ear that had the delicate form and color of a rose-petal. He took a seat at her side with respectful coldness, although he was trembling with desire, to such an extent had this mysterious and seductive creature in a few minutes succeeded in disturbing his senses. He took her hand and gently re-

moved the glove, then carried the slender white fingers to his mouth and began to kiss them, one after another, with caressing devotion. Finally he reached the wrist and the tapering arm, grazing with his mustache the satin-like flesh that thrilled slightly beneath his ardent touch.

Thus they remained for some seconds, not daring to look at each other, their eyes vaguely wandering, their ears filled with the tumult of the orchestra, which was letting loose all its instruments in a mad quadrille. The cadenced sound of feet beating the floor, the cries and loud laughter of the dancers filled the hall with jovial racket, and buried in the depths of this darkened box, pressing closely to each other's side, Jacques and the masked woman were in absolute solitude, more untrammelled than if silence had reigned about them or than if they were in an untenanted room. In coaxing tones he said to her in a very low voice:

"It seems to me that you are not unknown to me, and that I have been in your company before. Won't you let me see your face? I am sure that you have nothing to lose by it. You are young, and certainly you are pretty. Have you reasons for concealing your identity?"

She nodded her head affirmatively.

"Even from me?"

She again nodded "yes," but her moist hand gave his a warmer pressure, and her trembling palm was locked in his. So great was the charm that emanated from her perfumed, supple and voluptuous form that the young man drew nearer to her and, almost at her feet, clasped her in his arms. She did not repulse him, and her heart beating wildly, her breath coming short and quick, quite carried away and yet upon her guard against him, she

remained in his embrace, surrendering to him her waist and shoulders, but jealously protecting her face, of which she would not permit him to violate the secret.

"Where have I seen you?" the young man asked. "Was it here, or was it in Paris?"

She did not answer. He continued: "Do you live in Nice?"

She remained speechless. He said: "Still, I have met you somewhere. Have I ever made love to you?"

A slight smile appeared on the woman's lips. She put a little distance between herself and Jacques, looked at him complacently, and said in a low voice: "You are very curious!"

"How can I help being so? I know that I shall adore you, and you are surprised that I should wish to know who you are! I shall know to-morrow, or day after to-morrow, or next week; why, then, not gratify me now, this very moment, by letting me see your face? Do you wish me to love you without knowing you?"

She whispered: "Perhaps so."

"Do you incur any danger by associating with me? Have you reason to fear any one's jealousy? Or are you in doubt as to my discretion?"

She made no motion, leaving him free to make his selection from his romantic suppositions.

He smiled, and went on in a passionate strain:

"Have your own way! I will love you as you are, unknown, masked, mysterious. What I shall love in you will not be a woman, but womankind. I shall not know who you are, but I will hold you to my heart. Your lips will not have whispered your name, but I will kiss those lips. Your eyes will not betray to me your secret thoughts,

but they will shed tears of tenderness, and clasped in my embrace, in spite of yourself, you will be mine."

As he spoke thus, he pressed her more closely to his side, and their breath mingled. Jacques was enveloped and intoxicated by an indescribable odor that disturbed his senses. Again his daring arm enwrapped her throbbing waist. The unknown, writhing as if she were in the flames of a blazing furnace, threw back her head upon the young man's shoulder, pressed her lips to his neck and bit him, uttering a wild, stifled cry. Her eyes were staring and sightless, her lips had lost their color, when her *capuchon*, disarranged by the fierceness of the embrace, fell back upon her head, and her mask was torn away and disclosed her features.

In an instant Jacques was upon his feet; he took a step backward and exclaimed with consternation:

"Clémence Villa!"

The actress recovered her senses upon hearing her name pronounced. She looked at her companion, who, motionless and pale, was devouring her with his glances; with a rapid movement she threw back her domino, and disclosing herself in all the lustre of her radiant beauty: "You wished to learn who I am," she said in a low voice; "now you know."

He bowed his head and mournfully said: "It is but a very little time since poor Pierre killed himself for your sake!"

"For my sake!" she quickly replied. "Are you very sure of that?"

Jacques became paler still, and, casting upon Clémence a frightened look, said: "Do you think that it was for some one else?"

"Do you not know that it was?"

He turned away from her, but she approached him and, seizing his arm with an audacious assumption of authority,

exclaimed: "It was in my house that his last night on earth was spent; it was to me that his last words were addressed. I know what no one, not even Davidoff himself, knows. Pierre, weary of his stormy life, disappointed in his artistic expectations and seeing nothing to hope for

in the future, fell into a state of moral decadence and, in obedience to some mystical superstition or other, offered his life as the price of the salvation of one dear . . ."

"Be silent!" interrupted Jacques, in a tone that was almost menacing.

"Why? Are you afraid of his ghost? It would not be either angry or ill-disposed toward you. He knew that I loved you. In his final paroxysm of disenchantment he said to me: 'He will love you better than I ever did, and if anything of what I once was shall subsist in him, it will be to me a remembrance of earth, and I shall thrill with delight in my grave.'"

The young man looked at her with horror as she uttered this sacrilegious lie. His legs gave way beneath him and he sank down upon the sofa, deprived of all his strength, as if he were about to faint. She bent down, and wrapping him in her arms as in bonds that he could not break, penetrating him with her warmth, intoxicating him with her perfume, rendering him dizzy: "He gave you to me," she said. "You are mine by reason of his will, and nothing can bring it to pass that you shall not love me, for it is he that loves me in your person."

And Jacques felt that she was speaking the truth, and that a mysterious force was already at work attracting him to this woman, as if Pierre had made over to him his unconquerable passion together with his soul. He revolted against this tyranny, however, and forgetful of his voluptuous intoxication, his prayers and his desires, he would have turned away from her whom he had urged with such ardor when she was unknown to him. He would not obey his dead friend; he would not consent to be his executor to carry into effect his posthumous

caprices. Somewhat of his courage, coolness and resolution returned to him; he arose, and displaying to Clémence a tranquil countenance: "All your incantations are powerless upon me, beautiful sorceress!" he said. "Besides, it was useless to have recourse to the influence of spirits to establish your domination; your eyes and lips would have been sufficient. You did very wrong in mingling your sorceries with love. Now I am afraid of your love-charms . . ."

"I shall have no need of using them with you," calmly said Clémence, "and whatever you attempt to do, whether you wish it or whether you do not wish it, you will love me."

He was opening his mouth to say no; she closed it with a hasty and impassioned kiss; then, without giving him time to recover from his disturbance, she made her way to the door, lightly as a charming phantom, and left the box.

When alone Jacques devoted a moment to reflection. The ball went on, noisy and tumultuous, raising clouds of dust which floated in the light of the chandeliers like golden motes. The spectators in the boxes, their elbows supported by the velvet-covered rails, formed animated and brilliant groups. The warmth, the gayety and tumult of the scene produced an impression of intense life. The young man's mind suddenly reverted to his miserable and painful existence of a few weeks ago, and he was filled with a great delight at the thought that he had regained his health and that he was again strong and free to do as he pleased on this night of pleasure, after he had so bitterly deplored his lost youth.

How often he had said to himself, with gloomy long-

ing: "If ever I succeed in throwing off the fetters of my weakness, if I regain my strength and cease to bend my head each day more sadly toward my grave, how well I will employ every hour of grace thus granted me by des-

tiny!" And now this dream was realized; the miracle so ardently longed for had produced its fantastic effect. Death had passed his victim by, or rather he had taken another victim, handsomer, more brilliant, more renowned than he.

Then Pierre Laurier's pale face arose before Jacques' memory. His eyes tight closed, a bitter smile upon his lips and shades of violet on his temples, the painter was sleeping his last sleep, tossed by the blue waves, caressed by floods of light. The everlasting murmur of old ocean, the mournful shrieking of the wind formed his lullaby, and now borne on the summit of some mountain wave, now sinking out of sight in the intervening valley, he went ever on and on, a wanderer of the sea, forever parted from the land on which he had shed so many bitter tears. Jacques, in his mind's eye, followed with his glance this body, a human derelict, terrified by the appalling vision and still selfishly comforted by the thought that his friend was indeed dead, since it was from his life that he drew his own life. He determined to rid himself of the nightmare that was oppressing him so painfully; he arose and broke the spell.

He beheld before him only the great hall filled with spectators, at his feet the dancing-floor held by a motley throng of masks. What he had taken for the murmur of the waves was the trampling of their feet and the deadened sound of their voices; the plaint of the winds was the strains of the orchestra. There had been no phantom: it was all reality. He again felt himself full of strength and ardor—and Pleasure was there, beckoning to him.

He passed his hand across his forehead, forced his features to relax into a smile, and opening the door of the box, went forth into the corridor and mingled gayly with the surrounding groups. Near the *foyer* he came across Patrizzi, flirting with a woman. He went up to him and addressed him as blithely as in the best days of his fast

life : " Shall we have supper, Prince ? You must have a dozen or so of people to bring with you. I believe that we have got all the amusement from this little fête that it is capable of affording. Suppose we go ?"

" What have you done with the domino that carried you off so boldly a little while ago ?" the Prince inquired. " Did you invite her ? Will she be of our party ?"

" Faith ! I sent her about her business."

" She wasn't entertaining ?"

"Funereal!"

"Didn't she make an appointment with you for to-morrow?"

"Yes, but I shall not go."

Just as these words fell from his lips a sea of masks rolled into the corridor and a harsh laugh was heard. Jacques turned pale. He looked about him with terror, seeking a white domino, but all that he could see was a group of young men passing by and pursuing some women in costume. A voice whispered in his ear: "Why do you play the braggadocio and lie? You know that you will keep that appointment," and it seemed to him that the voice was that of Clémence Villa. He turned; there was no one near him but Patrizzi. "I am becoming mad," he said to himself. He took the Prince's arm, and with feverish eagerness: "Let us go!" he said, and dragged his companion away.

When he awoke the next morning about eleven o'clock in his bedroom in the villa at Beaulieu, he had only a vague recollection of what had occurred the night before. He remembered that he had drunk an enormous quantity of champagne and that he had played the piano for the women to dance by. With the exception of this choreographic episode, all was veiled in propitious darkness. He had been brought home in a carriage by a friend who was returning to Eze. What had he said? What had he done? That was a mystery, and he made no effort to fathom it.

Stretched upon his bed, his eyes bathed in the bright sunlight which entered the room in floods through the windows, he was conscious of an exquisite sense of well-being. His head was clear, his breathing regular, his cir-

culation normal, and he abandoned himself with delight to that recumbent position that had appeared so detestable to him when racked by fits of coughing that left him perspiring, weak, and dejected. He had supped, had come home late, had enjoyed one of those rackets which had formerly cost him a week of illness and prostration, and here he was, strong and healthy. He had a feeling of profound satisfaction: it was indeed the recovery that the doctors had so long promised him and of which he had nevertheless had so many cruel doubts.

He lay there enjoying the sensation of living; then, leaping suddenly from his bed, he began to dress. He went about the room, humming a tune, joyously, free from all care. He raised the sash of his window and the warm air came in caressingly; the perfume of clematis came up and saluted his nostrils. Walking slowly upon the terrace, as he had done at the opening of the season, he beheld his sister.

Her sad face was turned toward the ground; and, with her dress of sombre hue, seemed to be in mourning for herself, for her health and youth and spirits. The contrast was so striking that Jacques could not repress a sigh. Pain and suffering had left him, but as if a victim were absolutely necessary to them, they had alighted upon poor Juliette, and just as he was rising, bright and strong, she was sinking, pale and weak. The nature of the illness from which she was suffering was unknown. From the day when Doctor Davidoff had brought them the fatal news of Pierre's death, the child's condition had gone on getting constantly worse and worse. An invincible languor had taken possession of her, and never complaining, seeking always to be alone, she seemed

glad of the suffering that was leading her with such rapid strides to the end of her existence. It displeased her to hear her health mentioned, and when she was

with her mother and her brother she would make an effort to shake off her melancholy; as soon as she was alone, however, she again became the prey of her sadness.

She was now left to herself and was walking wearily in the garden, where her black dress formed a sombre

contrast with the brilliancy of the verdure and the flowers and the clear blue of the sky. Jacques went downstairs. His mother was in the drawing-room. He went up to her and kissed her. She looked at him closely, and seeing how dazzling he was with youth, she gave a happy smile.

"You came in very late, did you not?" she said. "It is not prudent to stay out all night when you are scarcely yet recovered."

"It was so long since I had been out at night."

"I hope that you enjoyed yourself?"

"Immensely."

"Be careful of yourself, my child, and do not be ungrateful toward that Providence which has restored your health. I am sufficiently distressed by your sister's condition; do not give me additional cause for anxiety."

"Is she worse?"

"No; and if she were, how are we to know it? She never complains; she does all that she can to conceal her despondency. But she cannot deceive me; every day I can see her failing more and more.... Oh, if Davidoff, who did so much for you, were only here!"

The young man grew pale as he listened to these words. He seemed to see the sardonic visage of the Russian doctor rising before him. What could Davidoff accomplish? Were they going to ask him to perform another miracle? Jacques was well aware that medical science was powerless; he had convinced himself of the hollowness of the methods that had been employed in his own case. The powerful aid that he had received had come to him from another and a mysterious world, but had not that aid been secured at the price of a fearful

sacrifice? Had it not been necessary that the blood of another should be spilled so that the blood in his own veins might be renewed and strengthened? And was not the tradition of human holocausts, practised in ancient times upon the altars of the heathen gods, revived in all its integrity by this devotedness of a human being giving himself freely to death in order that it might be merciful toward another being, already designated by its fatal finger for the grave? Could the miracle be performed a second time? And who would offer himself as the sacrifice? Pierre had done it for him; who would for her?

His reflections were interrupted by his mother's voice:

"Besides, even if the doctor were here, would Juliette accept his treatment? When she is questioned she says that she is not ill, that she only feels a little tired and that there is no cause for uneasiness. But this indifferent way that she has of looking upon her case is just what worries me more than anything else, and I impute her prostration to a moral cause which causes me the greatest anxiety."

"A moral cause, you say?"

"Yes; the child has some secret grief, and notwithstanding the courage with which she conceals it, she cannot hide it from me. Every morning I see her come down more pale and wan from the insomnia from which she has suffered overnight, and this has been going on for the last two months. Oh! I know the exact date when this sad condition of affairs began; it is fixed firmly in my memory. It is a melancholy, and at the same time a happy one for me, for it marked the beginning of your convalescence and the commencement of your sister's

decline. Yes, Juliette received the blow that day when Doctor Davidoff came to tell us of Pierre Laurier's death."

If Mme. de Vignes had looked at Jacques at that moment, she would have been terrified to see the spasm

of anguish that contracted his features. His mother had told him in so many words what he had already told himself without caring to go to the bottom of his secret thought. Pierre's end had had this twofold effect, at once beneficent and destructive: to him it had given life; to Juliette, death.

As this brutal fact presented itself more clearly to him, a feeling of anger arose in his heart against that innocent creature whose interests were so diametrically opposed to his own that that which was beneficial to him was fatal to her, and that it seemed impossible that the brother should continue to live without the death of the sister. A fantastic freak of his imagination showed him their twofold destiny symbolized under the horrible alternative of the gambling-table: red or black? One the color of blood, the other the color of mourning. And if it was the red that came up, then Juliette should die; and if it was the black, then he should relapse into his harrowing agony.

A great wave of selfishness passed over him and he clung desperately to life. He felt that he was capable of doing anything to preserve it; nothing would stop him, not even a crime. He was so cowardly as to raise his eyes toward the patient child who was walking pensively in the garden and say to himself with a base feeling of satisfaction: "Two months ago it was I who was dragging myself wearily along that sunny terrace, and now I am strong and I can enjoy living. To-day I can throw to the winds all my regrets, all my repinings, which then appeared to be of so little avail, and give full scope to my every desire and hope. I came near losing all, and I have regained everything. Life and strength are mine, what matters the price at which I purchased them?"

In the deep silence of his conscience there rose no voice of protest against this deification of self. His heart was mute, his mind was shut against every generous thought. Nothing stirred within him at this frightful

absolution that he accorded to himself for all the evil that his useless existence had caused, and was still to cause.

In the midst of this moral impassibility, however, some words that Mme. de. Vignes had uttered startled him. His mother had said: "I think that Juliette was secretly in love with Pierre Laurier. I never ventured to ask her, for fear lest her answer might be an affirmative one, for I could have given her no consolation. Alas! and can there be anything more cruel for a mother than to see her child grieving and not be able to comfort her with a word of hope? Still, it would be best to know, for there, perhaps, lies the wound that it is our duty to try to heal."

It seemed to Jacques that a force which it was impossible to resist was impelling him to fathom this painful mystery. He shrank from everything that reminded him of his friend's death, and yet he was urged onward by an invincible curiosity. He wished to know, and he trembled to learn. He would have chosen to be silent, and yet he could not restrain himself from saying: "Suppose I speak to her? She might make me the depositary of her secret."

"Ask her, then, very gently, and if she does not wish to say anything, do not urge her; let her be silent if she chooses."

"You have no cause for fear."

Juliette was returning toward the house. Mme. de Vignes made one last, mute appeal to her son's tender compassion, and went in.

The young girl raised her eyes and saw her brother standing before her, seemingly awaiting her. A tender look came to her eyes, and her cheeks flushed with pleasure. She was transformed, and for a few seconds she

was again the Juliette of old, sound in health, cheerful, in all the blooming beauty of her seventeen years; but a cloud passed over her brow, her features sank, her mouth lost its smile and she was again the melancholy girl that they had been accustomed to behold for so long a time.

She took her brother's arm of her own volition and supported herself by it with frank delight. "You are quite well, dear Jacques?" she said.

He nodded affirmatively, gently pressing Juliette's hand.

"What pleasure it gives us no longer to see you ill and unhappy!" she continued. "For you did not endure your illness with patience, and you are not much inclined toward resignation." She gave a little shake of the head, as if to say: "Women have more courage, they bear suffering with better grace." They had reached the front of the house, the very place where, beneath the veranda, Davidoff had told Jacques of Pierre Laurier's death. The drawing-room window was still partially open behind its blinds, but Juliette was not there on the watch to learn her misfortune. She knew, now, all that she had to look forward to; she was only awaiting the end of her suffering, but there was no one on earth to whom she could look for this deliverance; it must come from above. With a tranquil air of indifference, she seated herself on one of the wicker easy-chairs and looked out upon the sea. Jacques reflected: "I must question her. What shall I say to her, and how shall I open the conversation? This small intelligence is so clear-sighted! She will weigh every one of my words and get at the meaning of my inquiries. A mistake would put her on her guard, and if she once distrusts me I shall be able to extract nothing from her; she will be impenetrable."

"Here we are at the middle of March," he said with an absent air. "We shall soon have to be getting back to Paris. Will you not be sorry to leave this place, darling?"

"It does not matter much to me where I am," she said, without even starting, as if she had thought: "I shall never be at rest until I am in the ground, in the deep silence and the tranquil slumber of eternity."

"I should have thought that the idea of departure would be disagreeable to you, would even have caused you pain, and I was on the point of requesting our mother to prolong our stay for a few weeks."

She let her head decline upon her breast, and seemed to have made up her mind to confide no portion of her thoughts. Her brother watched her closely, trying to surprise some more violent palpitation of the poor, suffering heart. "I myself," he continued, "should not have been sorry to remain here for a little longer time. I shall be sorry to leave this country, for I shall always feel attached to it, now, by a tie of sorrow." His voice failed him. Every time that he had to speak of Laurier he trembled, as if he felt the remorse of a criminal complicity in his tragic end. "It is here that I lost the friend whom I loved most dearly, and nothing will ever console me for his loss. I feel that in leaving this place I shall be going farther away from him. And still I know not where to go to weep for him, since the waves have never restored to us his form, since we have not had the supreme consolation of putting up a last prayer in his behalf. All this land where I beheld him moving, walking for the last time, detains me, as if there were a secret hope that I might see him appear again here some day."

Juliette started at these words and raised her eyes

questioningly; she made a gesture of delight that was instantly repressed. "Do you think that it is possible that he is not dead?" she asked.

He replied in hollow tones: "His body has never been found."

"Alas! is he the first that the jealous sea has kept for its own?" the girl exclaimed with a heart-rending accent. "No; we must not treasure up illusions and delude ourselves with dreams. He lost confidence in his future, he judged wrongly those who loved him, he despaired of life,—and the misfortune is certain, irreparable! We shall never again look upon poor Pierre! He has gone from us forever. Never again shall we hear the sound of his voice, his laugh... nor even his complainings. He has gone to that land from whence there is no return, and we may weep for him without fearing that our tears will be wasted!"

She had become animated in speaking thus, and her grief, which she no longer attempted to restrain, overflowed from her heart to her lips, like a torrent that is swollen by a sudden storm. Jacques, deeply shocked, looked at his sister, and in the bitter regret that she now confessed to, he looked for some trace of a reproach addressed to himself. He asked himself: "Has she any suspicion of the frightful secret? If she had to choose between him and me, which one of us would be her choice? Would she sacrifice her brother or the object of her love?"

Drying the tears that were streaming down her face, she was silent for a moment, then went on: "As a compensation, Heaven has delivered us from the fears that your health inspired in us. Enjoy your life, dear Jacques, and employ it in loving us."

She made a movement as if to go away, but he detained her and, looking her steadily in the face, said: "This, then, is the secret of your despondency and your suffering! You loved him?"

Without hesitation or embarrassment she replied: "With all my soul. With you and my mother he was the only one that ever occupied my heart."

"You are not twenty yet. At your age sorrow is not eternal. All the future is before you."

She hung her head sadly, then very gently said: "Let us never speak of this again; it would cause me useless pain. I am not of those who forget and suffer themselves to be consoled. Deep in my heart there is a temple erected to Pierre where I worship. He will be the constant object of my thoughts, but it is painful to me to hear his name uttered in my presence. I promise that I will be careful of myself and neglect nothing that will restore me to health; I have no wish to distress you or cause you anxiety, but leave me the freedom of my grief."

She gave her brother a gentle smile and resumed her solitary walk along the terrace. He, much affected, entered the house and ascended to his mother's room.

Mme. de Vignes was anxiously awaiting him. "Well?" she said as soon as she saw him.

"Well! I have talked with her as we agreed I should, and I found her, if not amenable to reason, at least very calm. Her affliction is deep and will not be consoled. I had thought that a prolongation of our stay here might be beneficial to her, but I was mistaken. I think that the best course would be to return to Paris and allow her to resume her old habits. Solitude will do her no good; it gives her too much opportunity to concentrate her thoughts on one single subject. There she will see more of society, which will necessarily divert her thoughts from the gloomy channel that they now run in, and the condition of her spirits will respond, I hope . . ."

"Will it be best to commence the preparations for departure at once?"

"No, that would be too sudden. We can leave here in two weeks."

"But will not the change of climate be injurious to you, my dear child? We are only in March, and it is still cold in Paris."

"What matters it? I am in perfect health again, and it is of Juliette alone that we must think."

"Well, I will follow your advice."

Jacques tenderly kissed his mother's hands. The breakfast-bell rang and they proceeded to the dining-room, where Juliette soon joined them. Mother and son affected to converse upon indifferent topics. The meal was not protracted. A feeling of constraint weighed upon the family, and the different members were agreed in desiring to be alone. Each of them arose immediately upon the conclusion of the dessert, the two women silently returning to their respective rooms and Jacques, smoking a cigar, going down to the shore.

At that spot there was a little inlet, surrounded by reddish rocks which were bathed by the murmuring waves. The verdure came down almost to the water's edge and died away there, and upon the sand mosses of a grayish green, like lichens, grew luxuriantly. Jacques threw himself down upon this natural carpet, and in the delicious warmth of the sun began to reflect. All was silent and deserted; before him and above him was immensity. The sky seemed to lose itself in the sea; the azure extended far as the eye could see. His gaze, fixed upon the distant horizon, became weary at last, dazzled by the limpid refulgence of the atmosphere, fascinated by the moving serenity of the waves.

Little by little the sensation of reality was obliterated within him, and he seemed again to be in the Casino during the night of the *veglione;* he seemed to hear the cries

and laughter of the throng, the trampling of the dancers, the music of the orchestra. The picture of that night of carnival arose before him in its entirety, and among the different groups he beheld the white domino. She was smiling voluptuously beneath the lace fall of her mask, and through the apertures in the white satin her eyes shone forth like diamonds. He seemed to inhale the subtile and penetrating perfume that emanated from her lithe form, and so lively was his impression of the proximity of this alluring woman in that lonely spot that he involuntarily stretched out his arms toward her. At last he broke the spell of the mirage and found himself alone.

A feeling of anger seized him at the thought that Clémence's memory could haunt him thus persistently, that she could obtrude herself thus upon his life and that he could not be off his guard a moment without being at the mercy of the sorceress. She had said to him: "Whether you will or no!" and it was in vain that he strove to exert his volition against her; he felt that she was winding her toils about him, perfidious and triumphant, mistress of his thoughts, his senses, and tyrannical sovereign of his will. He reflected upon his sensations, and asked himself why he resisted them, what was the reason of the instinctive repugnance that he felt for her, or rather what was the reason of his fear. For this woman was dangerous, that he knew; and she inspired him with terror. Every one that had been near and dear to her she had caused to suffer; ruin, dishonor, death, those were her gifts to those whose love she had gained. And her hatred was even more to be dreaded than her love. And yet she was so beautiful, with her red lips, her eyes of velvety softness, and her di-

vine form! What had he to fear? Was he not her chosen lover?

Then Pierre came up before his memory. Had not he also, he, the famous artist, been loved by her? And had she not quickly wearied of him; had not her insatiable love of change, her shameless fickleness, that made the word fidelity sound hateful in her ears, impelled her to deceive him? Poor Laurier, how he had suffered! Her almost royal luxury had been stained by his sweat, by his tears, by his blood; thanks to her, he had allowed the delicate flower of his genius to wither away. Like a thorough-bred horse, harnessed to the heavy plough of labors that were repugnant to him, he had foundered in his attempt to gain the money that she scattered so lavishly along her way of life, and when his ability to work deserted him he had had recourse to the gambling-table, to obtain from chance that which his abused and wasted talent would no longer furnish to him.

Jacques knew all the stages of this wretched portion of Laurier's existence. He had seen the painter pass through them one by one, sinking each day a little lower into his moral degradation, knowing himself lost, undone, sobbing in his despair, uttering loud cries of blasphemy, and unable to refrain from going forward to his fall, to his destruction, when the woman whom he so loved and execrated made him a signal with her rosy finger, or let fall a word from her lips of flame. What was the spell, then, satanic or divine, that this creature possessed, that she could thus bring desolation to the hearts of men and fill them with a raging storm of love that it was impossible to allay? The only rival that could triumph over her was Death. Why had his friend in a manner bequeathed her

to him? Did he mean that he was to be his avenger? And did he suppose that he was capable of subjugating the monster?

Laurier's features rose before his eyes, such as he had beheld them for some time past in his troubled dreams. He was mortally sad, and his lips moved, and it seemed to Jacques that he murmured: "Take care; I gave you life, but she will take it from you. Her appointed end on earth is the undoing of man. She it is who punishes baseness, selfishness, falsehood and infamy; whenever man commits a crime, she it is who is charged with the duty of avenging it. She is the force of destiny; impelled by fatality, she smites indiscriminately him who is guilty and him who is only weak. Consider what she did with me. She lied when she told you that it was my desire that you should love her. No; I fled from her, even to the grave, and she inspires me with horror. Believe her not, nor listen to her, nor even look at her. Her looks degrade, her words corrupt, her embraces kill. Fly from her; if she approaches you, if she seeks you, if she calls you, put distance between you and her. It lies in your hands now to decide whether you will live or die."

Laurier's sad face disappeared, and Jacques was again alone, in front of him the rolling sea, and about him on every side the enchanted desert, where all nature lay radiantly basking in the clear sunlight. He said to himself: "I am becoming visionary. What is the meaning of the fears and scruples by which I am besieged? Can it be that this woman holds any power over my existence; and if I love her, even though it be only for a day or for an hour, shall I therefor be lost? Mere puerilities of a mind that has not yet recovered all its strength; I am not as

entirely cured of my illness as I had thought. But what is it that causes in me this feeling of uneasiness? What is the nature of the moral crisis that I am experiencing? Is it criminal for me to love the woman that Pierre loved? For it is from that that spring the reproaches of my conscience. Am I doing wrong? And then is there not a large element of individual fancy and social convention in what people have agreed to designate as right and wrong?"

His selfish nature answered him: "There is that which pleases, that which you desire, and that is all." And the woman who had disturbed his peace of mind, whom his conscience told him was forbidden fruit to him, pleased him; he desired her. His heart was deaf to every argument that his reason suggested to him against the passion

that was hurrying him away. At that very moment, as he sat there upon the warm rocks in the enjoyment of a delicious tranquillity, his feet at the brink of the waves that were rolling in fringed with foam, his excited senses were attracting him toward the fair magician, and he was trembling with impatience. He knew that at Nice, only half an hour away, the fête was going on, and that "the battle of flowers" would draw to the Promenade des Anglais the entire colony of elegant men and women of fashion. Clémence would be there, and she was waiting and watching for him, she was calling to him. He had but a step to take to be with her.

His heart beat fiercely, as though it would suffocate him, and all his being went out toward her. His weakening reason told him: "But she braved you; she said to you, 'Whether you will or no.' Are you going to obey her, then, as if you were her slave? You have very little pride and courage. Do not go; stay where you are. Take care!"

He was already upon his feet. The magnetic force that had always brought Laurier to submission after so many oaths that he would not yield was now acting upon Jacques. The attraction of this girl, ghoul that she was, annihilated the will of those whom she desired to entice and was stronger than reason or than distance. However the young man might argue the case with himself, his passion was finally victorious; he went to the house, took his hat and cloak, and left without bidding his sister good-by.

V.

THE passion that Clémence inspired in Jacques was the stronger that it had been resisted. A caprice had thrown the young woman and the handsome young man together, and they loved each other with an exclusiveness that placed

an insurmountable barrier between them and the rest of the world. For two weeks they lived only for each other in the pretty villa on the Mentone road, either under the

flowering orange trees of the garden, or among the low luxurious divans of the Moorish drawing-room.

At evening, not without great difficulty, Jacques would tear himself from the beguilements of his charmer and return to Beaulieu. His mother and sister only saw him for a moment, before his departure in the morning, and it

caused Mme. de Vignes a feeling of deep sadness to see that the unhoped-for restoration of her son's health had been to him only a signal for resuming his former dissipated way of living, that consuming life that had brought him so near his end. She had ventured upon a remonstrance, which had been answered with a smile. Jacques,

in a hurry to be off, had kissed his mother, assured her that he had never felt stronger, which was the truth, and that there was no cause for uneasiness, and then, unwilling to listen further to advice or entreaties, he had made his way to the station and taken the Monte Carlo train. So the two women remained alone, and their days were passed in silence and in gloom, while at the villa Jacques was enjoying the wasting pleasures that had destroyed Pierre Laurier's talent, debased his character, ruined his courage and transformed the famous artist into a wreck who had sought forgetfulness of his brilliant past in death.

Clémence, all the more dangerous because she was now sincere, loved as she believed that she had never loved before. In this handsome, blond, rather effeminate young man she found the charming and delicate lover who, besides, served so well as a foil to her dark beauty. Her power over him was complete, and she influenced his life to such a degree that he had not a thought that was not hers, not a wish that was not inspired by her. It was as if she had had a philtre by which she could impregnate with love the very marrow in his bones, the fibres of his being, every nerve and every particle of flesh. She was the devilish succubus of this man, who was happy in his misfortune, who thought himself at the very pinnacle of felicity and never stopped to measure how deep must be his fall.

While revelling in these delightful emotions the time drew near that had been fixed for Jacques' departure, and Clémence, unable to endure the idea of parting from him, made ready to return to Paris. It was not without many and deep regrets that they left that delicious region,

that seemed to have been made expressly for the abode of love; but they consoled themselves by the thought that in the city opportunities of seeing each other would be much more frequent, and if they desired they could be together almost all the time.

The effect that the return to Paris produced upon them was, in her case and in his, quite different. Jacques experienced a profound feeling of delight upon again beholding the city which, in the days when he was so ill, he had thought he should never look upon more. The bustle of the streets, the stir and noise of the crowds, raised his spirits and had an intoxicating effect upon him; the charm of Paris made itself felt. He had left the most delicious climate, and now his eyes feasted upon a wondrous scene. The cloudy sky, the wide avenues lined with mansions of stone, seemed to him admirable, and he said to himself that there was nothing more beautiful in all the world. He joyously returned to his bachelor apartment and shut himself up there with delight.

Clémence, on the other hand, again domiciled in her great hôtel in the Avenue Hoche, together with the luxuriousness of her existence was obliged to resume its cares. Down there at Monte Carlo she could live like a little *bourgeoise*, while at Paris she again became the famed inhabitant of the *demi-monde* whose household expenses cost her no less than three hundred thousand francs year by year. A sudden transformation had taken place in her: Jacques could not believe that she was the same woman; her tone and manner and way of life were completely changed. In her presence one felt that he was with a woman who had armed herself for the battle of

life and was always on her guard not to be surprised and overcome.

She evinced a deep tenderness for Jacques; she told him that he was her master and that she was entirely subject to his will; but the very fact of her telling him this so clearly showed his waning influence that it made the young man reflective. Clémence was aware of the impression she had produced and did her best to remove it. She became gentle and caressing, and for a while was again the simple and charming lover of old days.

The security of Jacques' faith in her, however, had received a fatal shock. In the little villa at Monte Carlo he might be able to flatter himself with the illusion that she had never loved any one as she loved him, but in the sumptuous hôtel at Paris everything told the tale of Clémence's past life, everything served to bring to mind her lovers, from Selim Nuño, who had bought the mansion and given it to her, down to Pierre Laurier, who had painted the superb portrait of her that hung in the great drawing-room. Disturbing thoughts began to occupy the young man's mind; he was sombre, uneasy, irritable. He was no longer sure of her whom he adored, and this increased his love.

They saw less of each other than before, although they had promised themselves that they would never part. This was not owing to any determination on Clémence's part, but because the conditions of existence were no longer the same and the demands on her time necessitated by her style of living were inimical to her love. Jacques gradually accustomed himself to confine his visits to stated hours, his passion worked more by rule. This was

very unfortunate for him; had he remained at Monte Carlo he doubtless would have soon reached the point of weariness of her, but the obstacles that he encountered at Paris inflamed instead of discouraged him.

Clémence, with that keen observation that characterizes every woman, and particularly those who make their living from masculine vanity and stupidity, at once comprehended his state of mind. She had known for ever so long that in men a feeling of security quickly begets indifference, and that the sharpest spur with which to urge a halting lover is uncertainty. Seeing Jacques occupying the anxious seat and upon the point of becoming jealous, she took a spiteful pleasure in keeping him in suspense, in allowing him to fear and hope. She thus inflamed his passion to the highest pitch of intensity. She beheld his sufferings with a refinement of delight, knowing that she had it in her power to make atonement for his anxiety by pleasures which would seem to him proportionally more keen.

Jacques had but little to say when not with Clémence, and his mother was greatly distressed by his lifeless, brooding manner. He would spend hours and hours lying upon the divan of his smoking-room, his eyes fixed upon the ceiling, inhaling the smoke from opium cigarettes that clouded his brain, never moving, never speaking, as if he were lost in a dream of hashisch. His health continued good; still, there was a pallor on his cheek that had taken the place of the bright, fresh color that he had brought back with him from the south. He was losing flesh, but his nerves sustained him wonderfully, and he would sit up all night with extraordinary zest, as if the

silence and inertness of the day had served to lay up a store of strength for his amusements.

Every day he would visit his club about five o'clock, and generally again at midnight. He gambled a good deal, and at the beginning with wonderful luck. He

would think nothing of winning five hundred louis before dinner, and this money, that goes so easily, he would let slip through his fingers with the most superb indifference. He afforded himself the pleasure of gratifying Clémence's luxurious tastes. A secret jealousy was tormenting him,

and he wished his mastership in the woman's house to be uncontested. He did not, however, acquire any additional rights there by this course, and three months after his return from Nice he was supporting the woman who had the reputation of being the most expensive in all Paris. He had not been satisfied with loading her with princely gifts, such as make the fortune of the jewellers and which he brought and laid in his mistress' lap as at Monte Carlo he had offered her a bouquet of roses and violets; he wanted to play the rôle of Jupiter to this Danaë af the Avenue Hoche, and from that day his life became to him an infernal one.

The stiff game of écarté that they had been used to play no longer sufficed to supply his wants, and baccarat opened a wider field for him. Gambling, which had at first been only a distraction for him and then an expedient for money-making, now became a passion. He was fond of it, not only for the pecuniary resources that it afforded, but also for the emotions that it inspired in him. He would deal with a magnificent impassibility that cloaked consuming sensations, he would make bets of a hundred thousand francs without a tremor in his voice, without moving a muscle of his face; but he would be boiling internally, and the quivering of his nerves was the more intense the more carefully it was concealed. When, after two hours of alternating gains and losses, fortune came and settled at his side of the table, his mind, exalted by the fierce desire of triumph, would relax into a delicious state of beatitude. There was an instant of intoxication that had not its equal, during which he was utterly oblivious of everything that was not connected with the game.

Clémence had early ascertained that she no longer occupied Jacques' affections exclusively, but she did not exhibit any jealousy toward the successful rival to which she was indebted for the means of gratifying her expensive tastes. Moreover, her feelings were undergoing a perceptible modification, one which was liable to happen in her case. Her social instincts had resumed their power, and the pretty whim of pleasure that had taken possession of her in the solitude of the south had not been able to make a stand before the distractions of Paris. She had fallen in with her female friends and renewed her relations with them, and caught in the whirling wheels of the daily recurring round of amusement, she found less time to devote to affairs of love.

And then, besides, as long as he had stood her off with his rough impenetrability Jacques had inspired her with passion, but when he gave way to her every fancy and, worst mistake of all, supported her as any common millionaire might have done, she was at the point of wearying of him. As soon as he ceased to be forbidden fruit he ceased to be appetizing. In that respect the actress was not more perverse than the ordinary run of women. The entire responsibility of whatever might happen was made to depend on Jacques. He had modified, of his own motion, the conditions of his intimacy with Clémence; he had disregarded the fundamental axiom of the philosophy of gallantry: "A woman's love is in direct ratio to the sacrifices that she imposes upon herself." No longer holding her by one end of the chain of her caprice, he might look to be deceived by her at any time; in Clémence's case the interval between the cessation of her affection and her treachery was *nil*, but it was not to be ex-

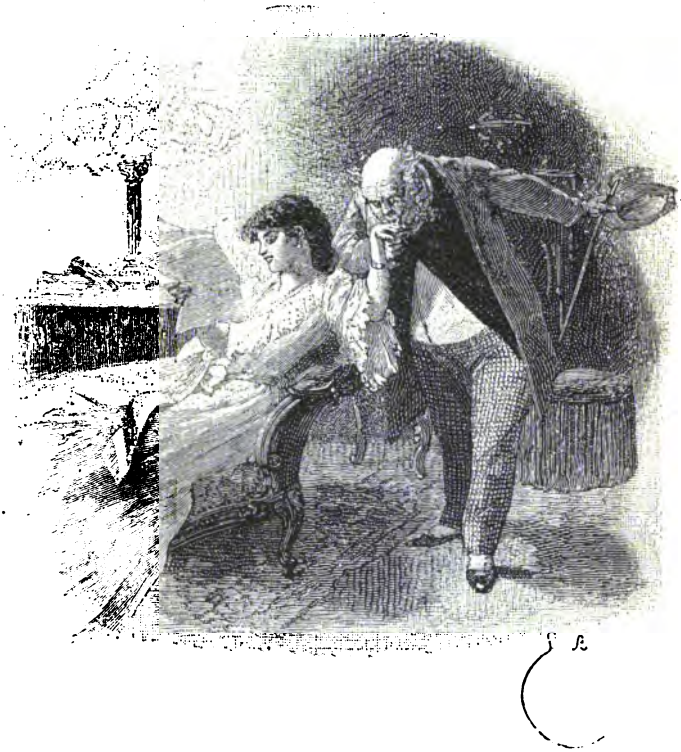
pected that she would restore Jacques to liberty because she no longer loved him. It was not in her nature to be thus generous, and in all Paris there was no woman who could so implacably torture the man whom she had ceased to love. She had kept Laurier dangling after her more than a year after she had ceased to entertain any fondness for him, and it was during this infernal period that the artist, in his torment and degradation, had dreamed of making his escape from this life that Clémence had made a hell to him.

Jacques saw nothing of all this as yet. The beautiful woman was past-master in the art of deceiving men; she continued to charm him with the same pretty smile, the same honeyed words, the same languorous caresses. Already his pleasure was not unadulterated, and so skilful was the imposition that his delight seemed none the less to him.

He now visited his mother only at long intervals; it was too gloomy there, so he stayed away. His sister day by day hung her head, paler and more feeble, although the symptoms of the disease that was slowly sapping her life could not be definitely diagnosed. By a strong effort of her will, however, in order to mislead Mme. de Vignes, she succeeded in maintaining an appearance of cheerfulness, but the mother was not deceived by her daughter's acting, and the two women, assuming such serenity of countenance as they might in order mutually to deceive each other, continued to drag on their lives in their secret grief.

The doctors in consultation had decided that the disease was anæmia. They could not see that any organ was affected, either heart or lungs, but it was evident to them that there was a slow, gradual wasting going on. It

seemed as if Jacques had abstracted from his sister all her store of strength and given her in exchange all his debility. It was a source of great astonishment to the practitioners who had attended the brother the year before to



see him leading his stormy life, while Juliette, who only last spring was radiant with health, was now bent and sickly. And Jacques, whom these two women had surrounded with so many attentions and such loving kindness, wearied by the complainings of his mother and chilled

by the mournful smile of his sister, was now avoiding them with heartless selfishness and enjoying to the full the life that had been restored to him.

June had come, and it had been Clémence's desire to go to Deauville, as she was accustomed to do at this season. For several years Selim Nuño had placed his splendid villa there at the disposal of the actress. Jacques, who was already beginning to look with displeasure upon the frequent visits that the old financier paid to the young woman, showed a disposition to resist when she spoke to him of her plans. Going to the sea-shore, that was good, and choosing Deauville was all right, but why accept Selim Nuño's hospitality? Clémence answered the question in an off-hand manner: "For ten years now, my dear, Selim has been a good friend to me. I have owed a great deal to him in the past, and I would not like to say that I shall never owe him anything in the future."

"That is not very probable, as long as I am here."

"So much the better, then. But you may not be here. Men are changeable. To-day you love me, to-morrow you may forget me. Those upon whom we can reckon under any and all circumstances are scarce; it is better to keep on the right side of them. And then come, Jacques, now really you can't be jealous of that poor old man? He is a father to me. And you know very well that you have nothing to fear from any one!"

She tried to overcome his resistance by soft words, but the young man's opposition was firm and based upon considerations that were already of ancient date. He listened, shaking his head with a manner that evinced very little conviction.

"I do not wish," he said, "to go and inhabit M. Nuño's

villa, for although he is not living there, we shall none the less be under his roof. What would people say of me in such a case? It would be such an easy matter to hire another villa and be under obligations to no one. If you are willing to do that, we can again lead the sweet life that we led at Monte Carlo; we shall have a delightful retreat upon the sea-shore all to ourselves and there will be nothing to prevent your giving me all your society. Here your occupations and your friendships are my constant rivals, and you are almost completely sundered from me, while down there there will be no one to interfere with us and I shall have you all to myself."

He spoke with feeling, and Clémence listened attentively to his words. His voice, that had once sounded so sweetly in her ears, now seemed to her common and indifferent, and his hands, which enclasped her own, no longer burned her flesh. He appeared to her in the light of a good-looking, blond young fellow, very exacting toward her and of whom she was beginning to weary. To his urgent importunities she answered with a smile which Jacques regarded as an omen of victory; he went to the young woman and took her in his arms. She made no resistance; she was carefully analyzing her own sensations. His embrace left her cold and unmoved; none of the transports that she had once felt now arose to warm her heart, and she felt that there were only lifeless ashes on the hearth, that the fire could never be relighted. Barely four months of love and all was over!

Her thoughts turned to the evening of the *veglione*, when in their box they had exchanged their first words of tenderness. How earnest had been her feeling then, how her heart had throbbed: and now how indifferent she felt,

how weary of it all! *He* continued to be dominated by his passion, but there was no mistaking it, *she* had worn out her caprice. At that very moment Jacques' sentence was pronounced. While he was holding Clémence in his embrace, she was saying to herself: "N... o, no, it is all over, with him, just as with all the rest of them. He worships me and I am tired of him. Shall I never meet with a man who will not love me and to whom I can give my affection for all time?" She rose from the sofa where she was sitting beside Jacques and went and stationed herself against the marble chimney-piece with a thoughtful air. "So you insist on having your own way? Very well .... I yield. Hire any house that pleases you, provided only that it is roomy, well situated, and has sufficient stabling for the horses, for I shall take my whole establishment down with me. But Nuño is to have the same liberty of coming to see me that he would have anywhere else, you understand, for I do not mean to break with my old friends, nor to allow myself to be shut up in a dungeon."

"Did I ever think of such a thing?" Jacques protested. "Have I not always shown confidence in you?"

Clémence looked at him and thought that he was decidedly silly. A faint smile played upon her lips, and for a moment she was silent; then she slowly said: "You are quite right to have confidence in me; if you were distrustful it would not make a bit of difference!"

It was a beautiful warm evening; they went out and had dinner at the Restaurant des Ambassadeurs. At eleven o'clock Clémence, who was in a pretty bad humor and said she was not feeling well, dismissed Jacques, who carried his irritation to the club, where, as they were just

starting a game of baccarat, he took the bank and dealt. It was a singular fact that, fortunate at cards as long as he had been loved, the very moment that his mistress had shown that he had become indifferent to her seemed to be the signal for ending his good fortune. Luck turned sharply against him, only returning to make him a few brief visits, and at daybreak he went home, a loser to the extent of three thousand louis.

He had won so heavily during the last few months that he attached no importance to this freak of fortune, which he looked upon as purely accidental. It only made him more ardent in seeking his revenge, but he encountered only loss after loss. In his surprise he only grew more obstinate, and in the course of a few days he was obliged to carry very large sums of money to the club to pay his debts. He had hired a house at Trouville and wanted to break up this terrible run of adverse luck; so, as Clémence was ready to go, they started for the coast of Normandy.

Life there went on with them much the same as at Paris, only with greater intimacy, which increased the young woman's coolness toward her lover, obliged as she was to assume an appearance of affection which she no longer felt toward a man who was as tiresome to her as any of his predecessors had been. She revenged herself by devising means to make him squander his money. It was the very moment when Jacques, seeing his ready means suddenly exhausted, had been compelled to have recourse to his reserves. A spirit of opposition seemed to be aroused in him by the difficulty of the situation, and he had never clung so closely to Clémence as now when she was drifting away from him. Perhaps this strange girl possessed the dangerous faculty of blinding the judg-

ment of her lovers, for, with the exception of Nuño, who had been her first protector and had never taken umbrage at her caprices, none of those whom she had loved and left had ever consoled themselves for her loss.

Clémence cut quite a dash at Monte Carlo, and the amusements that she organized were the talk of the entire beach. There were horseback parties every day, taking all the young folks of Trouville out on the Honfleur or Villers roads. The livery-stables were turned inside out in those

days, and a decent horse could not have been obtained in all the country for love or money. The ladies entrusted themselves to four-in-hand breaks, and at breakfast-time the whole party would draw up in front of one of the excellent inns that line the coast, and then the cavaliers would dismount and amid the dust and the bright sunlight and with a great din of merry cries and laughter, would help the pretty girls down from their lofty perches on the mail-phactons. Then came the fluttering of white skirts and fleeting glimpses of little feet and well-turned ankles that made the rustics stare with amazement as

they stood with gaping mouths in the doors of their dwellings.

At other times they would all go on board Baron Trésorier's steam-yacht and over a sea that was as smooth as oil, would sail away to Fécamp or toward Cherbourg. At evening all the merry crew would meet again in the Casino at Trouville and dance until midnight to the music of the orchestra, then home and to bed, tired out with the day's pleasures; all excepting the gamblers, who would assemble at the club, where a game would be started that ended only with the break of day. Jacques would deal with a hard but impenetrable expression of face, with a luck that still continued to run strongly against him, and he beheld the last remnant of his little fortune rapidly disappearing in the wreck. He did not allow himself to be discouraged, and with inconceivable confidence waited for a change in his fortune. He argued that it could not always remain faithless to him, and that he would repair his losses in the course of a few evenings,—a reasoning that is common to all gamblers, a hope that is shared by all who see themselves ruined, but neither hope nor reasoning are often ratified by destiny.

One evening when he had been playing with his usual bad luck, the bank being put up at auction, he heard a voice that was familiar to him utter the often-repeated words, "Bank open." He raised his eyes and, separated from him only by the breadth of the table, beheld Patrizzi. His look met that of the Prince, who saluted him with a friendly smile. At the same instant a person who was standing behind the Neapolitan came forward from the ring of lookers-on, and with a horrible contraction of the heart Jacques recognized in him Doctor Davidoff.

The young man could not move a step ; he stood there as if nailed to his place. The cold perspiration stood in drops upon his forehead, there was a ringing in his ears. It was as if the fleshless image of Death had come and planted itself in front of him. He was still standing there motionless, powerless to advance or to retire, fascinated by the keen glance of the Russian, when Patrizzi's hand fell upon his shoulder. Jacques turned with an effort, and listened with a dazed expression to what the Prince was saying to him. He could hardly hear his words, but the thought that people were observing him and that his manner must seem strange to them restored him somewhat to himself; he passed his hand across his forehead and succeeded in saying to Patrizzi: "Have you been here long?"

"A quarter of an hour or so. Davidoff and I came in together just at the moment when your bank was most hard pushed. Those Englishmen inflicted pretty heavy punishment on you, my dear friend."

"I am not in very good luck just now," Jacques stammered.

"That is what those gentlemen were just telling me. But, excuse me, they are waiting for me to deal; I will see if I can't get back what they won from you. Ah! here is Davidoff coming to speak to you." He took his seat upon the high chair, shuffled the cards, handed them to his neighbor to cut, and opened the game. Davidoff had left the group where he had been standing, and was leisurely advancing toward Jacques, examining him closely meanwhile. When he reached him he took his hand, rather as a physician would do than as a friend, and felt it to ascertain its suppleness, its warmth and nervous con-

dition, then releasing it with a shake of the head: "You are feverish, Jacques," he said, "and the life that you are leading is very bad for you."

The doctor's words of wisdom broke the spell under which the young man was lying. Davidoff was no longer in his eyes the mysterious person, custodian of the secret of the means by which new life had been infused into his exhausted frame, but a simple, kind-hearted man, differing in no respect from other men. He recovered his equanimity and gayly said: "It would be a bad life for any one; still, as you may see, I am not much the worse for it. But it is terribly warm in here; let us go where we can get a breath of fresh air—shall we?"

He put on his overcoat and went out upon the terrace, leaning on Davidoff's arm. The weather was delightful; the night was soft and balmy and the heavens were bright with stars. The waves died away upon the sand of the beach with a gentle murmur. Away to the north the Havre lights were shining through the darkness. Profound tranquillity reigned over all. The two men walked up and down for some moments without speaking, recalling to memory the occurrences in which they had been associated and which united them by such powerful ties. They had a thousand questions to ask each other, but the fear that they might say too much held their curiosity in suspense. Jacques was the first to speak. "You have not been long at Trouville?" he asked the doctor with assumed indifference.

"Count Woreseff's yacht, on which I am a guest, brought us in at five o'clock this afternoon. We dined at the Roches-Noires, and as the owner was tired, he re-

mained on board. Patrizzi and I found our way to the Casino, where I knew that I should meet you."

"Ah! somebody told you . . ."

"That you have been staying here with Clémence Villa for three weeks past, that you have been playing a great deal, but with horrible luck, and that you were in good health. That is the extent of my information."

Jacques frowned. "They told you the truth," he coldly replied.

"And is this the use that you ought to put your newly recovered health to?" the physician gently asked. "Oh, I don't mean to pose as a moralist or read you a sermon. You know that I have a friendly feeling for you, and that is why I speak to you as I do. Clémence Villa! So that is the kind of woman that I find you with! And it is for her sake that you are gambling with this insensate fury. Come, my dear friend, are you quite sure that you are in your right mind?"

"I am quite sure that I am madly infatuated with her," Jacques answered in husky tones, "but I am not sure that it lies with me to have it otherwise. The love that she has inspired me with bears such a close relation to my recovery that it seems to me to be the very principle that effected it. And then what would become of me if I should cease to devote myself to this passion, which annihilates thought and absorbs every fibre of my being? I am afraid to ask myself the question, and I do not care to know the answer." He bent his anxious gaze intently upon the doctor. "I must not think, don't you see? for if I did, I could come to no other conclusion than that my life is an anomaly, full of danger to others and to myself. No! no! I must not think! And the life that I

am leading, and that you reproach me with, is the only one that can help me."

"But your strength will not hold out," said Davidoff; "you will kill yourself."

"Do you think that there is any chance of it?" replied Jacques with a nervous laugh. "Is my fate in my own hands? Am I not impelled by a sort of fatality?"

"Be careful. This way of looking at the matter, tending as it does to shift the responsibility of your acts from your own shoulders, is too easy a manner of excusing many faults," the doctor severely said. "You were afraid to die, and you are alive: there is an incontestable fact. Do not ascribe it to supernatural causes. You are cured of the complaint from which you were suffering; is yours the first case of that kind? It was I who attended you; give me the credit of your recovery, and do not believe in Pythagorean fancies that a child would laugh at!"

"Were you laughing that evening when you told us those stories at Monte Carlo?"

"Did I tell you that I believed everything that I told you? We had had a good dinner and our friends had brought up the subject of spiritualism, and the conversation turned, somewhat incoherently, upon the transmission of souls. I took my part in the general concert, but if you care to know what my opinion really is, I will tell you that I am a materialist, and consequently I cannot admit that our bodies are animated by a principle of which I deny the existence."

"To what, then, is my recovery to be attributed?" Jacques inquired in a trembling voice.

"You recovered because the perforation of your lung, due to consumption, fortunately healed, thanks to the

treatment that you were subjected to, assisted by the favoring influence of the climate.... How can you see any miracle in that? Not a year goes by without bringing with it similar phenomena, so satisfactory to those who are interested, and they never cause this mysterious disturbance in the minds of those who profit by them."

They had come to a halt at the margin of the sea, the surface of which, lying before them bathed in the bright

moonlight, glittered like molten silver. Jacques stood there for a moment, silent, then suddenly ejaculated, as if he were relieving himself of a burthen that was crushing him: "And Pierre Laurier?"

"Pierre Laurier had lost his senses," the doctor gravely replied, "and you know very well who it was that robbed

him of them. Jacques, I would like to see you yourself again; I would like to display to you the life that you are leading in all its horrors, to make plain to you the utter infamy of her to whom you are sacrificing everything."

"Silence!" Jacques violently exclaimed. "I will not permit you to speak of her in such terms in my presence."

"The evening when Laurier disappeared," continued the Russian, "it was not I who indulged in those fearful invectives against Clémence; it was he. He cursed her bitterly, and yet at the same time an unconquerable force was drawing him toward her, and a hundred times before he had heaped the same injuries upon her, only to end in the same abject submission. He knew it; he used to grind his teeth and pray that Heaven might give him courage to strangle the monster and then end his own life. Once again the monster was victorious over him who wished to render her harmless, and now it is you who are her victim, and after you there will be others. And if it were you alone that had to suffer!"

"Davidoff!"

The Russian seized Jacques' arm in a firm grasp. "You have illusions upon the fair one's fidelity?" he said. "Laurier had none, and yet he returned to her all the same. He loved her more passionately than you, for you have never experienced the trial of her faithlessness, and therefore you cannot know to what depths of infamy Clémence will make you stoop. Have you ever surprised her in company with another lover? Not yet, you say? Very well, it cannot fail to happen some time or other, and then, when you have roared with rage and pain and threatened to kill everybody, you will come crawling like

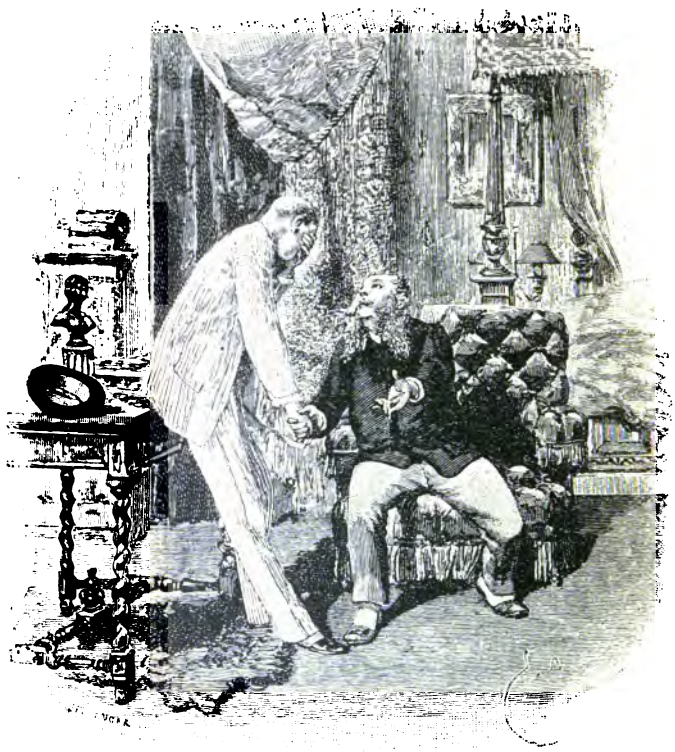
a whipped child to the feet of the guilty woman and sue for pardon! Yes, that is what you will do. All have played that abject comedy before her, it will be played many a time again. That is why she despises men, takes them up according to her whim of the moment and casts them away when they have ceased to please. Try to soften her, and you will see with what cold cruelty she will gloat upon your tears, your lamentations. She will insult you, she will laugh in your face, will give you the history of her new loves, name to you the happy master of her heart. And you will wish to murder her, as Laurier did, and you will pray for death.... Come, Jacques, be sensible for a moment; have your wits about you. What I said to Pierre upon that fatal night I am saying now to you, standing here upon the shore as we stood then, beneath the starry sky on a night that was twin to this. His answer to me was that it was all of no avail, that he had not the strength to follow my advice; he left us and we have never seen him more. He was alone in the world, but *you* have a mother, a sister. Think of them. Do you wish that they should have to grieve for you?"

"They are grieving now," Jacques mournfully said. "I am the subject of great anxiety and sorrow to them. They are very unhappy, poor innocent creatures, and all for my sake. Oh! I know how guilty I am, and all the more so that they are so gentle and resigned. You have not seen my sister since you left here; it would alarm you to behold her weak and melancholy condition. The doctors have all sought in vain to discover the cause of her illness, but my mother and I know what it is, and you, too, must have divined it. The wound from which she is suffering and from which it is fated that she shall die

is at the heart; she loved Pierre Laurier, and nothing can comfort her for his loss. She told me so down there, before we came away, and I, wretch that I am, received her despairing confession with a feeling of coldness, almost of hatred. It seemed to me that she was reproaching me with the death of him whom she had lost, and I was irritated and turned away from the poor child instead of comforting her and mingling my tears with hers. I felt Laurier's life and strength beating within me; he had given them, they were mine. The sufferings that I had endured and the dread prospect of approaching death were so fresh in my memory that I believe I would have been capable of murder in defence of the life that had been so miraculously restored to me. For these reasons I abandoned myself madly, senselessly, to pleasure, in order to stifle my better reason and force my conscience to be silent. But I am a coward, a low, abject coward! and the life that I am leading is the proof of it. Davidoff, why have I not the power of recalling Pierre to life? It would be poor Juliette's salvation, and, who can tell? perhaps mine as well. Yes, could I but again behold Laurier alive, I should regain confidence in my own strength, and I should cease to believe in that supernatural aid which, whatever you may think of it, has been my sole stay and support hitherto. I should have the proof that I hold my life on the same tenure as other men; or else the feeble flame within me would be extinguished, and then would come peace, repose, oblivion.... Oh, delightful! For, do you see, I am weary, oh! I am so weary!"

Jacques allowed a deep sigh to escape him, and bowed his head dejectedly upon his breast; his torturing emo-

tion sent painful tremblings through his frame, and the cold sweat stood in big drops on his forehead. The Russian watched him with sympathizing attention. "You



are not well, Jacques," he said. "There is a chill in the sea-breeze; you must not remain here."

"What difference does it make?" the young man defiantly said. "Heat and cold are nothing to me. It has done me good to tell you what you have just heard. I

am a poor fool, and for a long time I have been subjected to evil influences against which I am powerless."

"Very well; if you are conscious of your fault, why do you persist in it? You told me just now that your mother is sorrowing and your sister is ill. Let us go and see them; let us start for Paris to-morrow morning. Let it be your duty to comfort the mother, and mine to heal the sister. Your presence will do good to both of them, to say nothing of the benefit that you will receive in your own person. Come, after the frank confession that you have made, show a little resolution! Are you not a man and can you not act like a man?"

The directness of this proposal seemed to embarrass Jacques; a shadow passed over his face. He was troubled at the thought of leaving Clémence, and doubtful as to what she would do in his absence. He stammeringly said: "Is it necessary that we should start to-morrow? Can't we put off the journey for a few days? It would give me more time to get ready."

"No!" Davidoff roughly answered. "If you put it off, you will not go at all. Start to-morrow or I will never speak to you again as long as I live; I will cease to number you among my acquaintance." Seeing the young man hesitate, he continued: "What keeps you? Are you a free man? Or have you to ask some one's permission before you can go away? Are things so bad as that? You are in a worse state than I had supposed."

"You are mistaken," Jacques exclaimed, seeing that the doctor was alluding to Clémence, "and I will show you that you are. We will start to-morrow."

"Sure, without any delay, under any pretence whatever?"

"You may depend upon me."

"That is right. Now let us go home and go to bed, so that we may be all right in the morning."

They passed through the Casino and went out. There was a cab standing before the gate; they awoke the driver, who was sound asleep upon his box, and ordered him to stop at the entrance of the harbor, after which they got into the vehicle. Slowly they rolled along the streets of the little slumbering city. They were both silent, reflecting upon what lay before them on the morrow. Suddenly the cab came to a halt upon the quay before the basin, and the cessation of the motion aroused them from their revery The pretty white yacht lay at anchor a hundred mètres from the spot where they were, a foot-bridge affording communication between her and the land. The doctor alighted, and once more clasping Jacques' hand, as if to infuse some of his own strength into him, said: "Well, good-night! I will stop and pick you up to-morrow; it is directly on my road."

"No, no! Don't take that trouble," Jacques quickly replied. "We will meet at the station."

"Be it so, then. Say an hour before train-time; we will breakfast together at the buffet."

They parted. The cab rolled away toward Deauville, and the doctor traversed the narrow bridge and leaped to the deck of the yacht.

The pressure of a hand upon his shoulder awoke Davidoff next morning about nine o'clock. He opened his eyes and beheld Count Woreseff standing before him. The blue sky was visible through the cabin skylight, and the sunshine, reflected by the dancing waves, played capriciously over the maple wainscoting.

"You are a sound sleeper this morning, my dear fellow," said the Russian nobleman with a smile; "this is the second time that I have been in your room and you did not even budge."

"What is the matter, my dear Count? Is there any one sick on board?"

"No, fortunately. I only wanted to know what your

plans are to-day before giving my orders. I feel like going to Cherbourg. Is that agreeable to you?"

"Excuse me, Count," said the doctor, "but I would like to spend a few days in Paris if it will not inconvenience you."

"You are free to do as you please. But see how lucky it was that I came in to consult you," Woreseff said good-naturedly. "What would you have said if you had awakened and found yourself out at sea?"

"You can't imagine the consequences that such an escapade would have entailed."

"Well, get up. When you are on shore I will leave the harbor, and when you come back you will find the boat here in the basin, right in this very same place. But what is it that attracts you to Paris, where it must be terribly hot, while it is so comfortable here?"

"It is a love-story," the doctor gravely replied. "A poor fellow that I am trying to save from a huzzy who..."

"Why don't you say a woman?" Woreseff coldly said, interrupting him. "It is shorter and amounts to the same thing. My dear friend, believe a man who has suffered fearfully from their unjust treatment when he tells you that there is only one way of dealing with women, and that is the way that is practised by the Orientals: pure, unadulterated slavery. Tell that to your friend from me."

"It is easy enough to tell him of it, but to make him believe it, that is another matter! Besides, he has reached your theory of slavery... only it is he that is the slave!"

"Poor devil! Well, good luck to you, Davidoff."

The Count lighted a cigarette, shook hands with his friend, and left the cabin. An hour later the yacht was

pouring out clouds of smoke through her funnels and slowly steaming toward the open sea.

When the doctor alighted from his cab at the railway station he found it void of travellers. The express was not to leave for some time yet. He went into the waiting-room: not a soul there. In the restaurant the lady cashier was yawning and reading the newspapers of the day before, while a travelling salesman, his box of samples on the floor beside him, was taking his early nip. Davidoff went out and walked up and down the court-yard, watching to see if Jacques was coming. After waiting twenty minutes his impatience got the better of him and he started off toward Deauville, taking the road that led to Clémence's villa and reflecting as he walked: "What is the meaning of this? Why is he late? What new notion has got into his head? Has he abandoned the idea of going with me? And yet he was sincere last night ... but he has seen that damnable woman and all his good resolutions have been scattered to the winds. Who knows? Perhaps he has even told her of our conversation, so as to curry favor with her by his treachery. Anything might be expected from him in his doting, drivelling state of mind."

The doctor's monologue had brought him to the door of the house; he raised his eyes to the windows, which stood wide open. In the court-yard a stable-boy was washing down a victoria, whirling the wheels around with a rapid motion so that the wet spokes flashed in the sunlight.

"At any cost I must know what I have to depend on," Davidoff murmured, and he deliberately ascended the

steps that led to a terrace and entered the vestibule of the villa. A servant responded to his ring.

"M. Jacques de Vignes?" inquired the doctor.

"M. de Vignes is not in."

"Will he be in soon?"

"I cannot say."

"Is Mme. Villa at home?"

"Madame is in the conservatory."

"Give her my card and ask her if she will receive me."

The servant went away on his errand, and the doctor strolled aimlessly about the vestibule, casting an incurious look upon the furniture of carved oak, the jardinières filled with flowers, the plaques fastened against the wall, and the great porcelain receptacle that was stuffed with umbrellas and sun-shades of many colors and canes of various woods. He said to himself: "He is keeping out of my way; that is clear enough;... but Clémence may give me some information that will be of service. I am going to face the wild beast in her den... Bah! I am not afraid of her; she only devours those who offer themselves for her banquet."

A portière was raised and the domestic reappeared: "If monsieur will follow me..."

After they had crossed a salon and a boudoir, and had reached a glazed door through which masses of verdure were visible, the servant stood aside to let Davidoff pass. Clémence, a smile upon her lips and carrying a small watering-pot, came forward to meet him along a little path that was bordered with lycopodiums and wound in and out among the palms and gum-trees; she wore a dress of pink foulard, with an antique belt of chased silver, ornamented with uncut garnets, encircling her waist.

"How do you do, Doctor?" she said. "What lucky wind blows you this way?" With a pretty gesture she displayed her hands that had been slightly soiled by

mould and merrily said: "I am physician to the flowers. I was just holding a consultation over these plants."

"I hope they are doing well?"

"Pretty well, thanks." She held up her watering-pot.

"I have been giving them a cooling drink, you see.... But to what do I owe the pleasure of your visit?"

"Might I not come simply for the pleasure of seeing you?"

She gave him a cold glance. "That is very pretty, and I am very sensible of your politeness, but I know you better than to believe that. You are not a ladies' man, and so, if you show yourself here, it is because you have some good reason for it."

"Well, it is true; I have a reason. I had an appointment with Jacques for this morning. He failed to keep it, and I feared that he might be ill."

"Ah!" Clémence ejaculated with a thoughtful air. She went to a little alcove where there were an iron table and some chairs and took a seat. "Yes, he certainly is ill," she said. She raised her eyes with an expression of seriousness, and tapping her forehead with her pretty finger: "There is where his illness lies!"

As Davidoff, in his desire to fathom the secret of this liaison, so full of danger, in his estimation, to his friend, refrained from answering, she continued: "He made a terrible fuss with me this morning, and all about nothing, —a bit of a letter, of not the least importance, that he took from my dressing-table and chose to get angry about, the mutton-head... just as if I didn't know enough to hide anything that I didn't want him to see. But he had one of his jealous fits; he threatened me, he shouted and cried—yes, he cried. How stupid! A snivelling man does not affect me in the least. He seems ridiculous to me."

"Then you do not love him any longer?"

"Why, yes, I do. Certainly I don't love him as I did

six months ago! 'Those passions are very nice, but it doesn't answer to keep them up too long, for they would ruin one. I am in earnest; I am good at figures. It was Selim Nuño who taught me arithmetic, and I got my money's worth! Now my stable alone costs me fifteen thousand francs a month. If I should attempt to live on love without money, even with the handsomest young fellow in the world, I should have to sell out my bonds, and then people would laugh at me in my old age. That won't answer, my good friend!"

"Oh! I know that you are a practical woman . . ."

"You mean to get off an epigram on me; I take it as a compliment. Yes, I am a practical woman, and I am not ashamed to own it! Jacques has treated me very well; he has done things very honorably, but he gambles, and of late he has been losing. His temper gets sour; he is a torment to me and a torment to himself. Why? I should like to know. If I had enough of him I would turn him out of doors and use no ceremony about it; if he is tired of me, let him clear out. Only let us part decently, without scandal."

"Would you like me to speak to him?"

"If you will."

"But where can I see him?"

"Right here."

"He has not gone away, then, as the servant had orders to tell me?"

"Not a bit of it. Go and give him a good talking to."

"That is just what I came for."

"Then you are twice welcome. Shall I take you to him?"

"It will be very kind of you."

rose from her chair. "It takes

That is the way to

"You are with

running after Sul-

what life is

when

would you have? We must all look out for ourselves." And lightly she tripped away down the staircase.

Davidoff knocked at the door; a voice in reply bade him enter. He turned the knob, and seated by the window in a great arm-chair he beheld Jacques, sunken-eyed and with pallid lips. The young man became a shade paler as he saw the doctor, and a cloud passed across his brow. He arose and advanced slowly to meet his guest with outstretched hand. "You are displeased with me?" he said.

"A little."

"Only a little? I do not deserve so much indulgence. I told you last night that I am a coward; well! I was not long in giving you the proof of it." His teeth were set and his features were painfully contracted. He inspired pity in Davidoff, who seated himself at his side and addressed him affectionately.

"What has happened since we saw each other last night to keep you from fulfilling your engagement? I should have thought that it would be a pleasure to you to keep it."

"What pleasure can there be for me?" Jacques replied in a low voice. "I do nothing but what is abject and detestable. Some wicked genie has taken possession of me and whispers to me only evil thoughts."

"Resist it. Listen to me. Only a few hours ago you submitted yourself to my influence;—do so again. Get your hat and overcoat and come with me; there is still time to catch the train."

Jacques made a threatening gesture. "No, I will not go away from here."

"What Clémence told me is true, then?"

"Ah! so you have seen her? And she complained of me, did she not? It is she who is the cause of it all.... Yes, she is destroying me, she is killing me; what I suffer through her is beyond conception. What madness she has put into my head exceeds my comprehension. Do you know that I am jealous of her? Yes, jealous! Outrageously jealous of a girl that has been, or will be, everybody's! What must be the moral condition that I have come to! The language that we used to each other this morning was frightful; she told me to leave the house; do you understand? to leave the house, as if I had been a lackey! And I remained—and I still remain! Why? do you ask. Because I cannot do without this shameless creature, whom I feel like beating and caressing at the same time; abject and adorable woman that she is, whom I am cursing here, separated from her by two floors, and to whom I would go down on my knees in prayer if she were at my side and exacted it of me!"

"Try to get away from her for a couple of days."

"No! no! it is impossible; I should find my place occupied on my return. You do not know what crowds surround her, what temptations are laid before her.... Oh! she deceived me; I had proof of it this morning—it was that which aroused my anger. But she is mine, all the same; I have the most of her; I can see her from morning till night. What a void there would be in my life were she removed from it! No, I have sacrificed everything to this woman, I have made every interest subordinate to her, and I must retain her—or else it is all over with me." He hid his face in his hands, and was silent for a few seconds; then resumed in despairing accents: "When my money is all gone she will turn me

away; that I know very well. She does not give credit. I have been compelled to have recourse to my banker, and I intend to gamble for the means of keeping up my way of life. It will not last very long, for luck is no longer on my side, but my mind is made up and I shall persist, although I see clearly what will be the inevitable ending of it.... You see that it is not an easy thing to preach morality to me, for I anticipate you and assume all the blame to myself. Let me go my way, my friend; I am not worth the trouble that you would be at in trying to save me."

Davidoff had listened, sick at heart, but attentively and with pitying curiosity, to these wild disclosures. He was well acquainted with this passion that had brought so many men to moral stupefaction and to suicide; he knew that it was constituted of the intoxication of the senses, of exasperated vanity, and in addition a kind of mysterious terror that seizes upon these rakes, accustomed as they are to the tumult of their feverish existence, at the thought that they shall henceforth have to lead a life of silence and isolation. After this prolonged feast to be alone again, with himself for sole companion! It would be like coming out of a ball with the music still ringing in his ears and going and burying himself in la Trappe. It requires a mind of exceptional strength to stand so great a change. He said to Jacques:

"Come with me; I give you my word that I will not leave you until you are quite recovered, physically and morally."

The young man burst out into harsh, nervous laughter. "No, no," he said; "leave me to myself; I do not wish for your protection. I am doomed; nothing will avail to

save me from the sentence of my destiny; I have lived only for evil; I am condemned to suffer all these tortures." He lowered his voice as if in mortal fear: "You know that it is not I who am doing and suffering, speaking and weeping. There is another being within me who is hurrying me on to the catastrophe. Even if I wished to stop, I could not. Oh! I feel that implacable soul stirring, furiously raging within me. It is jealous! It is revenging itself on me! As long as it continues to animate my body I shall never cease to suffer; when I shall be freed from its presence..."

Davidoff frowned at this speech, and he was on the point of exclaiming to Jacques: "Are you crazy? Laurier has disappeared, but Laurier is alive. I humored your fancy because I believed that confidence was the only thing that could restore you to life and health; but as you have reached such a state of hallucination that that which caused your salvation is to-day working for your destruction, I ought to let you know the truth." He was restrained by one consideration: "He will not believe me. I must show him his friend cured of his moral malady in order that he may himself be cured."

He turned to the young man and said to him, very gently: "Since you will not go with me to Paris, I will go alone. I will go and see your mother and sister."

A shadow clouded Jacques' face, and his eyes glittered as if tears were about to fall. "Thanks," he said, in husky accents. "Try to obtain their pardon for me for all the evil I have done them. They are so good, so loving." He arose, and his form was shaken by a terrible trembling. Oh, I am a wretch! and it would be better if I were dead!"

Just then a clear, fresh voice came to them from the garden through the open window: "Jacques!" He hurried quickly toward it. Clémence was gathering roses

among the flower-beds. She saw him, and gayly called: "Well, have you finished your sulks? The weather is charming; come down, and we will go and take breakfast at Villers."

Jacques returned to Davidoff's side, deeply agitated. "You see, she is calling me, she is waiting for me," he said. "She is not so bad as I said she was.... She is ter-

rible at times, but then she loves me at the bottom of her heart.... Come, my friend."

He hurried to the staircase, and they descended to the vestibule. There Jacques gave the doctor a warm clasp of the hand, and as if impatient to be left alone with Clémence, said: "Adieu! Again pardon me.... Comfort my mother... and cure my sister.... Oh, do that, above all things!... Poor child!... Adieu!"

With rapid steps he moved away toward the garden where his pitiless tyrant was awaiting him. Davidoff, when once in the street, hurried away with long strides. Through an opening in the foliage he caught a glimpse of the white yacht steaming out of the harbor, trailing her plume of black smoke behind her. He said to himself: "I am free; let us take advantage of it."

He went to the telegraph-office, took a blank and, standing at the wicket, wrote as follows:

"*Pierre Laurier, care of M. le Curé of Torrevecchio, Corsica:*

"Return at once. Your presence necessary. See no one on alighting from train, and join me at Grand Hotel.

"DAVIDOFF."

He handed the despatch to the clerk, paid it, and went out, murmuring: "If I cannot save the brother, I will at least endeavor to save the sister." And then he took the train for Paris.

VI.

DAVIDOFF'S despatch was handed to Pierre Laurier on the day of Agostino's marriage to the daughter of a rich farmer of San Pellegrino. The sailor had made quite a little fortune by his traffic along the shores of the Mediterranean and was able to bring his bride six thousand francs, while she, a strong, brown mountain lass of sixteen, was owner of a house and an olive-field. The young people had loved each other for a year, and so the marriage had been agreed upon on Agostino's giving his promise to give up the sea.

The people were coming from the church, and there was a sharp, crackling discharge of musketry in congratulation of the auspicious event as the newly married couple passed among the crowd, as if the vendetta had arrayed one half of the country against the other. Hurrahs burst from the cortège, every face was bright with gladness, and in the brilliant sunshine, in the summer heat and the fumes of gunpowder, a kind of intoxication seemed to have taken possession of the brains of the whole company. Pierre, with little Marietta on his arm, to whose brides-maid he had played best man in the church, allowed his delighted glance to wander over every detail of this striking and original fête, already framing in his mind the conception of the fine picture that resulted from it and that subsequently acquired popularity under the title of *A Corsican Wedding*.

His mind had regained its firmness and his heart

was at rest. His memory was unclouded by a shadow. He was entirely wrapped up in witnessing the happiness of these people whom he loved, and in whose patriarchal

mode of living he had found oblivion for his unhealthy passions and a renewal of his manly strength.

The whole company was on its way to the house of the bride's father, there to enjoy a banquet in honor of the occasion. Just as they were coming out in front of the farm-house an urchin, who generally acted as choir-boy to the good curé of Torrevecchio, rushed through

the throng, and running up to the venerable priest, handed him a blue envelope that had been left at the presbytery. The child, with his strong little mountain legs, had only taken an hour in traversing the distance between Torrevecchio and San Pellegrino. He was breathless, perspiring and covered with dust.

The curé read the address, and turning immediately to Pierre: "Take it, dear child," he affectionately said, "it is for you."

A circle had already formed about the young man, who, with anxiety upon his face and compressed lips, was holding the message in his hand without opening it.

"What is it?" Agostino asked uneasily.

"It is that blue paper," said the urchin, "that was just now brought from Bastia by a messenger. He was sent express, as it seems that the matter was urgent. Then Maddalena, M. le Curé's servant, said to me, 'Run quick, and do not stop for anything until you have seen Monsieur. There is something of importance... for a paper like that has not been seen in Torrevecchio for three years!' So I took all the short-cuts and here I am."

He wiped his dripping face on his sleeve as he spoke, laughing and showing his fine white teeth, delighted to have done his errand so well.

"You shall have a glass of Tollano and something to eat with us, Jacopo," said Agostino. He pushed the child over toward his father-in-law and his relations, and deeply troubled by the anxiety that was evident on Pierre's features: "What is it?" he repeated.

Pierre leisurely tore open the envelope, unfolded the telegram, and read the urgent appeal that had been sent him by his friend. He turned pale; his heart sank, and

his eyes retreated deep within the caverns formed by the contracted brows.

"Is there something wrong?" Agostino inquired.

"No," said the painter, "at least I hope not. But I must start for the main land without delay."

"What! go away at such a time!" the sailor sorrowfully exclaimed. "You will not leave us before the end of the fête;—wait until to-morrow, anyway."

"If you had been told while you were across the sea that your fiancée was ill and might die while you were away," gravely replied Pierre, "would you have delayed your departure?"

Agostino warmly clasped his preserver's hand, and with tears in his eyes: "No; you are right," he said. "But you must know you are causing me a great sorrow."

Pierre took the young man aside, and with a sudden outburst of emotion that enlightened Agostino as to the character and circumstances of his friend, addressed him thus: "We must do nothing to sadden your wife and your relatives and guests. It is four leagues from here to Torrevecchio by the road. I am going to take a light carriage from the inn; I mean to go alone. Once I am over the mountain you will explain the reason of my departure and thank every one here for the cordiality and kindness that they have shown me. I assure you that I shall never forget the happy days that I have spent among you in this country. I was very ill in brain and heart, and you, by your wise and beneficent tranquillity, have made me well again. I have forgotten the sorrows from which I thought that I was about to die, and it is to you that I owe it: to your mother, who has been so kind to me; to your little sister, whose naïve grace of

manner has often reminded me of the young girl who is waiting for me in my own country; and finally to you, good fellow that you are, who were the cause that when, in a moment of desperation, I was about to end my life, I chose to live in order to try to save yours. You restored me to myself; it was you who made me feel that my lot still lay with humanity. No; I shall never forget you, and, in sorrow or in joy, often will my memory turn to all my old friends here."

At these words Agostino could not restrain his tears and commenced to sob, more distressed than if he had been losing one of his own family, while the wedding-guests, engrossed in their pleasures, were singing, shouting, and firing their muskets in the orchard. Pierre quieted the good fellow, and then, speaking with firmness, said:

"Now, try and understand me clearly. I must get to Paris just as quickly as possible. When does the next boat leave Bastia and where does it go to?"

"The Morelli line has a boat leaving for Marseilles every Tuesday. You can secure your berth when you reach the city to-night and early to-morrow morning you will be at sea. From Bastia to Marseilles it is thirty hours."

"In three days I shall be in Paris, then. You will allow me to forward from there, dear Agostino, some little remembrances for the dear women of your family You need have no scruples; you have seen me dressed. like a peasant for nearly a year, but I am not poor. Silence that Corsican pride of yours; from a brother you may accept all things for mother, sister, and wife. Think of me, and be assured that you will see me again; perhaps

when I revisit the island I shall not come alone; in that case Heaven will have taken pity on me and I shall have regained my happiness. Embrace me, and until that time, farewell!"

The two men pressed each other to their hearts as they had done that night when they were tossed by the sullen waves beneath the pale moon, and when they parted it was with a mingled accompaniment of smiles and tears.

Free Circula

Half an hour later Pierre was tearing along the road to Torrevecchio in his *carriole*, and having packed up his pictures and sketches, reached Bastia that same night. He alighted at the inn where he had passed his first night upon Corsican soil, went and secured his passage on board the steamer, and then entered a ready-made clothing-store and replaced his velvet attire by a full suit of blue cloth that became him very well.

When he had put on his more civilized clothing and was buttoned up in his closely-fitting waistcoat and sack, a restraint to which he had not been subjected for many a long month, he heaved a sigh.

It seemed to him that he was leaving behind him that young and independent Pierre Laurier who had worked ten hours a day with such delight beneath the bright, clear sky, among the vivifying odors of the pines and junipers, and that he was about to be transformed again into the enslaved, nerveless Pierre Laurier of old, cursing his fate and doubtful of his future, spending his time between the alcove of a courtesan and the gambling-table at the club. He raised his head. Night was coming on, but the moon, like a great silver shield, was shedding her light upon the mountain-side through the thick clumps of chestnuts, bathing the overhanging rocks in her pure resplendency. The air came from the forest, balmy and perfumed, and caressed the young man's brow like the soft touch of a bird's wing. He felt himself inspired with new life, as by a cheering recollection. He looked out over the sea, which was rolling in long, peaceful swells, and murmured: "You may bear me away now; I no longer fear you, nor those from whom you part me." His moment of uneasiness passed from him, and as he

was upon the point of making the supreme trial that was to shape his life, he discovered that he was master of his thoughts and of his senses.

He no longer felt within him the degrading, passionate throbbing of the heart for her whom he had loved so madly. He had courage to summon up her vision, and he beheld her, with her narrow forehead crowned with its black hair, her beautiful eyes with their long, sweeping lashes, her intoxicating glance and her voluptuous lips. Suddenly he was enveloped in the woman's subtile perfume, perfidious summons of the past. There was no responsive echo within his being; he remained unstirred and contemptuously cold. It was ended; he loved her no longer; the charm was dispelled, the philter had lost its virtue. He was master of himself once more, and his free heart was his again to offer to whom he would. Then Juliette's image appeared before him in its pure and gentle chastity, and Laurier's eyes were wet with tears. His trembling lips whispered an avowal, and all his being went out through intervening space toward the one he loved.

The boat put out of the harbor at nine o'clock the next morning. Pierre caught a glimpse of the wharf near which the Saint Laurence was lying at anchor while he was repainting the wooden image of her patron saint, the mole, the bastion of the Dragon, and then successively Cape Corso, Giraglia, and the coast of Italy. As the steamer churned her way rapidly through the water he retraced the whole route that he had gone over while he was on board the little smuggler.

As he drew nearer to the shores of France, his mind anxiously sought to fathom the reason of Davidoff's sud-

den summons home. He began to be disturbed by a secret uneasiness, for he feared that there was bad news. What could it be? The words of the letter that the doctor had written him after his visit to Torrevecchio came to his mind: "A person, a near relative of Jacques, came near dying on account of your death." Could it mean Juliette, and that her condition had been growing worse? Was he to reach home only to see her fade away at the very moment when all his hopes were centring in her? And yet the letter contained these words as well: "You passed close by happiness and saw it not,... but it is yet within your power to find it again." Was this happiness about to escape him a second time? Pretty as she was, must not the young girl have gained for herself some man's love? Had not another, while he was far away, taken his place to heal the wound that was bleeding in her heart where she dwelt in loneliness?

A feeling of profound sadness took possession of Pierre's mind at the thought that the supplication that he had addressed to destiny might pass unheeded, and he felt that this disappointment would be to him a decisive stroke, breaking him down and killing him. He was devoured by a thirst for more intelligence; on board the steamer that was cleaving the blue waves he would have wished for some means of communication with Davidoff; he stretched his hands forth toward the land, as if the reassuring news that he hoped for were awaiting his arrival there. He envied the albatross its rapid flight as it sailed above him, white and solitary, in the deep sky. He walked incessantly, with nervous steps, from bow to stern. In his agitated condition it seemed as if he were trying to make the engine work more rapidly.

He did not sleep, remaining upon deck scanning the horizon. He passed successively Genoa, Monaco, Nice, Antibes, Toulon, skirting that enchanted shore where the trees dip their branches in the pellucid sea, where the waves murmur with a sound inviting sleep as they expire

upon the golden sands. His heart beat more rapidly as he descried in the distance the Chateau d'If, dark and stern in the gathering night, and Marseilles with her flaming light-houses, like great eyes peering out into immensity. He loaded his scanty baggage upon the back of a porter, sprang nimbly across the gang-plank, selected a cab upon the wharf and told the driver to take him to the

railway-station. He required no time to rest; nothing could divert him from his resolve to get to Paris as quickly as possible. The express did not leave until half-past eleven and he had an hour to wait; he went to the telegraph-office and sent this message to Davidoff: "Landed Marseilles; will reach Paris to-morrow evening six o'clock."

When he had seen the receiver hand his despatch over to the operator he felt some alleviation of his anxiety, as if some portion of him had gone forward in advance. He went to the station restaurant, where he ate something without appetite, for the sake of killing time. Finally the train was made up and the gates opened; he went and ensconced himself in a compartment, where he abandoned himself to the delight of the rapid motion. Buried in his corner, his eyes closed, though he did not sleep, he did not move hand or foot, counting the stations that separated him from his destination as a prisoner marks off upon a calendar the days that separate him from liberty.

At daybreak, however, his strength failed him and he fell into an uneasy slumber; he had not slept a wink for fifty hours. When he awoke, with a joyful feeling of surprise that he had got a little the better of time in his impatience, it was broad daylight and the train was rushing into Mâcon. On either side of the track the rich fields of Burgundy, so fertile, so smiling, so full of health, were flying past him in a flood of sunshine. Pierre felt that he was nearing the country of his home; he again beheld a landscape that for a year had been a stranger to his eyes. No more olives, pines, and cacti rising from the scanty yellow herbage; no more red rocks and foaming torrents; no more shepherds armed with their muskets,

watching from the elevation of some knoll the wanderings of their few sheep and frolicsome goats. In their place were peasants, large of frame and at the same time active,

driving along the golden furrows their great white oxen harnessed in pairs to the heavy plough. And wide plains there were, covered with the ripening harvest, vineyards where the vines were weighed down by the heavy clusters,

broad expanses of dark green forest, the whole intersected by roads bordered with bright turf and stretching away in long perspective. It was central France that he was contemplating in its rich beauty, not soft and sunny Provence or stern, grand Corsica.

The horizon kept flying past as the wheels whirled around, the train shot along past hills and valleys and over rivers, and Pierre gradually sank into an anxious revery, asking himself with fruitless persistency what could have induced Davidoff to summon him home so precipitately. When the train was approaching Paris he was again seized with a feverish restlessness; his watch was out of his pocket more than twenty times between Melun and the great city. When they passed the fortifications he arose from his seat and began to make preparations for alighting. At last the whistle sounded the signal to slow down, the wheels thumped and rattled over the switches, and in the midst of a crowd of laborers assembled to inspect the travellers, the train drew up alongside the platform.

Pierre leaped from the car-step to the ground and was instantly seized in two strong arms that gave him a vigorous embrace. He uttered an exclamation of joy as he raised his eyes and recognized Davidoff, and giving in turn a hearty squeeze to the hands of his faithful friend, he drew him to one side. "Well?" he asked, concentrating all his anxiety and curiosity in one short question.

"Be calm," said the Russian, who understood Laurier's uneasiness, "Juliette is not in any immediate danger."

Pierre gave a deep sigh, as if his heart were relieved from a great burthen. "And Jacques?" he inquired.

"Ah! Jacques," Davidoff replied, "it is his case that is

Davidoff laughed. "At all events, no one can accuse you of not saying what you mean!" he said. "See *her!* Are we to discuss *her*, and no other subject? Well, well, you are right; it is of her that we must talk. I have been here since the beginning of the week, and have been preparing her mind gradually for the miracle of your resurrection. For many long months, now, she has been lamenting you in the secret recesses of her soul. At the very first words that I uttered implying that there was a doubt as to whether you were dead or not she seemed to rally, but in such a way as to terrify her mother and myself. She was seized with a burning fever. She is so very weak! By a phenomenon so strange as to be almost incredible, your disappearance had this twofold consequence: it endowed Jacques with strength sufficient to keep him from dying, and it took from Juliette the courage of living. She has been slowly pining and wasting away, like a flower stung by some invisible insect. As to her brother ... but it is better to speak only of her."

"Is it so very distressing, then, what you have to tell me in relation to Jacques?"

"Shocking, morally and physically. This week, driven by his imperious need of ready money, he has forced the sale at auction of the real-estate that is owned jointly by his mother and sister and him. The warnings of the notary, Mme. de Vignes' prayers, all have been to no purpose! He insists on realizing, regardless of what the property may bring, caring nothing for the great loss that will be entailed on them all by this forced sale. He is mad, and his madness is dangerous!"

"But this madness, by what or by whom is it caused?"

"By love. A woman has been the ruin of this wretched

man, who was before only too well disposed to give way to the basest weakness."

"And this woman is so seductive that he cannot be enticed away from her, so strong that he cannot be taken from her by force?"

"She is the strongest, most seductive, most dangerous woman in the world! And if I were to tell you her name...."

Pierre turned ghastly pale at these words, his eyes stared wildly, and his lips parted as if to ask a question or utter a name that he saw ready to fall from the doctor's mouth. He did not have time; Davidoff smiled bitterly, and giving the painter a look that seemed to read the secrets of his heart:

"Ah! you understand me, I see," said he. "Yes, Clémence Villa is the woman into whose clutches Jacques has fallen. She loved him ardently, and he loved her—just as every one loves her. At the end of three months she changed and became as cold as marble, but he is more impassioned, more madly in love than ever. But what need is there of my attempting to describe to you his mental condition? To understand it you have only to look back into your own recollection."

As Laurier continued motionless and speechless, his head bowed upon his breast, the Russian added with energy: "He adores her, Pierre; do you understand? he adores her, still warm from your caresses..... And he lives for her alone!"

The painter raised his head and spoke in a mournful voice, with deep compassionateness: "Unhappy man! For her, for a creature like her, he has forgotten all, lost

all! But he is to be pitied rather than condemned..... She is so terrible!"

Davidoff's face lighted up at these words, his eyes sparkled with joy; he went up to his friend, and speaking with an affectation of irony: "So, you feel no emotion in your heart for Jacques except pity?"

"What other sentiment should I feel? Should I blame him, after having shown myself weaker and more culpable than he? No, I cannot help but pity him!"

Davidoff took Pierre's hand, and clasping it warmly: "And this reminiscence of your old love does not stir your heart? It brings no emotion to your mind? Is there no return of kindness for the woman, no feeling of irritation for the friend?"

"So that is what you were afraid of?" exclaimed Laurier, whose pale visage suddenly became suffused with color. "You were wondering if I were indeed cured of my senseless passion, and you tested me to ascertain? Ah! you need not distrust me; speak candidly.... You doubted me?"

"Yes," said Davidoff with decision. "I wanted to know whether, perhaps unknown to yourself..."

"Ah! question me, scrutinize my thoughts," cried Pierre. "You will discover there only bitter sorrow for the faults that I have committed, and the sincere desire to atone for them. You would never have looked upon my face again had I not considered myself worthy to receive a pure affection and capable of responding to it by an unalterable tenderness. Distrust me not, then, Davidoff. The Pierre Laurier that you knew died one stormy night, and the man that stands before you, if he wears the same face, fortunately has not the same heart!"

"That is good," said Davidoff, cheerfully. "That is one load less upon my conscience. If I had not been able to place entire dependence upon you, I don't know how I should have got through with the task that I have undertaken. It is full of care and difficulty. You will have to face Clémence...."

"If it is absolutely necessary I will do it, but it will be a severe trial."

"Of course!" replied the Russian, with a smile. "But certainly not so much so as it would have been a while ago. We must do all we can to snatch Jacques from her claws, and it will require nothing less than your intervention to give us success. We can let this matter stand for the present, however; let us talk of Mlle. de Vignes."

The light returned to Pierre's countenance. At the same moment dinner was brought in; the two friends seated themselves at table, and for an hour conversed with complete frankness, Pierre telling the story of his sojourn at Torrevecchio, and the doctor explaining to the painter all that had happened in his absence. In this way they were enabled to satisfy themselves, Davidoff that Laurier was, as he had asserted, radically cured of his dangerous passion, and Laurier that Davidoff in recalling him so hastily had acted with as much decision as wisdom. Toward nine o'clock they went downstairs and took the road toward Mme. de Vignes' house.

On the boulevard, under the influence of a lovely summer night, Pierre felt his heart moved by an impulse of hope and joy; he raised his eyes toward heaven and repented that he had ever allowed himself to doubt the existence of happiness.

Davidoff had given Mme. de Vignes to understand

what was going on four days previously, and she had beheld the future, that had appeared to her so dark, illumined by a faint glimmer of light. The certain assurance that Pierre Laurier was alive, the confidence with which Davidoff declared that the painter loved Juliette and could love no one else, had brought a little comfort to

the mother. In the midst of her sorrows, having everything to apprehend from the misconduct of her son and everything to fear for her daughter, the prospect of restoring to Juliette health and peace of mind was a very agreeable one. What were cares of money compared to the anxieties which she experienced on account of her

daughter's constantly failing condition? She had received Davidoff as her preserver.

Carefully imparting his confidences little by little, he had begun by implanting in Mlle. de Vignes' mind some small seeds of hope that had taken root readily as in a fertile soil. This seed had fructified and extended its roots, and now the perfect flower was formed and ready to bloom and was only waiting for one last ray of sunshine. Since the early part of the week Juliette, without proofs, without any reasonable explanation of her belief beyond her ardent desire to see the miracle realized, had firmly believed that Pierre was still alive.

Davidoff's "people say-sos" had been eagerly received by the young girl. What improbability was there in Pierre having been met by those travellers who asserted that they had recognized him after he had been saved by some sailors and taken aboard a small trading-vessel? What was there so strange, he having announced his suicide and then having failed to carry it into execution, that he should feel ashamed and remain in seclusion for nearly half a year? Why should he not have allowed the de Vignes family to remain ignorant that he was still alive? There was nothing improbable in all that, and the young girl felt such an imperious necessity of admitting the truth of it that she would have believed much stranger stories.

Every day Davidoff, pursuing the treatment of his moral cure, rendered an account to Juliette of the discoveries that had been made by the inquiry that he was supposed to be conducting, and every day he saw that dulled, chilled soul awaking to new life. It was a charming sight, that timid putting-forth of leaf and flower. Juliette

hoped, and yet she feared to hope, and at times she drew back in fear from the descent toward which her imagination was impelling her. If, after this period of happiness, she was to have to fall back into her former gloom and sorrow? If there was no truth in what they had been telling her—if Pierre had not survived?

She was prey to a most horrible inquietude. It seemed to her impossible that death could have snatched away in a second this quick-witted and vigorous young man. She recalled what her brother had said to her at Beaulieu: "His body has not been recovered." At that time she had not received the doubt as a hope, but now was it not plain that if the sea had not cast his corpse back upon the shore it was because he had escaped its cruel waves, had emerged from its glaucous depths and was alive? This thought had impressed itself so deeply upon her woman's brain that to remove it material proofs would have been required. To convince her who loved him that Pierre was dead, it would have been necessary to show her his lifeless body.

That same morning Davidoff had ventured to say to her: "I dined yesterday with some people who met our friend in Italy and conversed with him. We may look to see him coming home some of these days."

She had looked at the doctor for an instant with strange intentness, then had said: "Why do you not tell me all? Are you afraid that my joy will be too great? You are wrong. I am convinced now that he is alive; I saw him in a dream last night. He was in a church, a poor village church, and was busying himself with a holy work. His face was sad, oh! very sad, and tears ran down his cheek at times,—I felt that he was thinking of me. I wanted

to cry out: 'Pierre, return; we are waiting for you; our separation has lasted too long, our sorrow has been too great. Return, and we will welcome you with gladness.' But a kind of mist arose between him and me, so that I could only distinguish him very faintly, like a vague shadow, and I heard distinctly the sound of the waves, as when the surf beat upon the rocks at Beaulieu when the sea was rough. Then the vapor was dissipated, as a veil that is torn aside, and I saw him again. He was coming toward me, with a smile upon his face; he made me a gesture with his hand as if to say: 'Have patience; I am here.' Then I awoke, trembling and in fear. . . . But I have confidence; he is not far from us. Perhaps he is in Paris?"

Davidoff was at a loss what to think of this; he asked the young girl: "Can you describe for me the church that you mention?"

"Yes," replied Mlle. de Vignes. "It is situated upon the principal square of a little village. The front is of red sand-stone, with a portico of brick over the entrance, the interior whitewashed and very meagrely furnished—a few wooden benches, a pulpit devoid of ornament, an altar of the greatest plainness."

"And the picture that Pierre was at work on, did you look at it, can you recall it?"

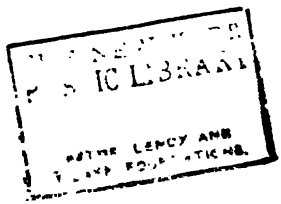
"Yes. It was an open grave, and the dead had come to life and were standing at the mouth of the tomb. I regarded it as an omen."

Davidoff shook his head, greatly struck by this extraordinary revelation. It was evident that he had caused Mlle. de Vignes to behold in her mental vision the church of Torrevecchio and the picture of the Resurrection by

some unexplained process of the mind, but how could he explain the sound of the dashing waves that the young girl had heard at the very time when Pierre was on the sea? He remained silent, and notwithstanding Juliette's urgent instances would give her no further information, but his attitude, his words and the expression of his face all announced that something was about to happen shortly. The doctor left the house, leaving the young girl in a state of excited curiosity that he did not consider unfavorable.

When he reached Mme. de Vignes' door that evening about nine o'clock, in company with him whose presence was so ardently desired, he was seized with a violent beating of the heart. He grasped his friend's arm, and indicating to him the last window of the entresol: "Remain here in the street," he said, "and keep your eyes fixed on this window; when you see me show myself at it come upstairs at once, but not until then. I am going to prepare them for your reception. . . . I am more anxious than I can tell you."

He entered the house and left the painter standing on the sidewalk. When alone, Laurier was seized with an emotion similar to that which he had experienced on the promontory of Torrevecchio when, after the receipt of Davidoff's letter, he had asked himself if he was worthy ever to look upon Juliette again. A kind of mystical tenderness filled his soul while he was awaiting the moment when he might present himself before the girl; his thoughts were serious and devout, with the feeling that a duty of atonement lay before him. He manifested no impatience, but the happy serenity of a convert who is



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about to abjure his errors, receive his pardon and live at peace with Heaven and earth.

He was standing with his back against the wall, his eyes fixed upon the window and his thoughts dwelling upon what was passing in the dark and silent room. Nothing stirred, all was still. A great peacefulness came and filled the young man's mind. One single feeling existed within him: his love for Juliette. He recalled the child's timid and ingenuous love, he reckoned up the sufferings that she had endured of which he had been the cause, and in the darkness of the night, standing face to face with his own conscience, he swore to himself that he would endeavor to make her forget them in her happiness.

At this moment the window was faintly illuminated from within and Doctor Davidoff appeared and with his hand signalled to his friend. Laurier rushed forward and flew up the stairs with a beating heart. The door stood open, he passed through the vestibule, entered the drawing-room, and there, standing with her mother in front of the fire-place, he beheld Juliette. He stood motionless, with faltering look and legs that barely sustained their burthen.

She appeared to him taller than before, but perhaps this was because she was thinner and paler. Her slender white hands stood out transparently white against her black dress, evincing how she must have suffered; her eyes, bearing the marks of the tears that she had shed, shone soft and luminous. She smiled and looked at Pierre, as Pierre looked at her. He was very agreeable in her sight, with his sun-burnt visage in its setting of brown beard, which he had allowed to grow. She dis-

cerned upon his brow the traces of his grief and experienced a secret delight in seeing them there, an offset, as

it were, to her own sufferings. All at once her smile was dashed with tears, and quickly raising her handkerchief

to her eyes she sank into an easy-chair and burst into a fit of sobbing.

Pierre gave utterance to a suppressed cry, and recovering at last from his immovability, he rushed to her and threw himself at her feet, supplicating and beseeching her to pardon him. Mme. de Vignes had anxiously approached her daughter, but Davidoff reassured her with a glance. Then the mother and the physician, seeing that the two young people were oblivious to everything but their recollections of the past and their hopes for the future, left them to enjoy the sweetness of their interview without the restraint of their presence.

When they returned to disturb the tête-à-tête, they found Pierre and the girl seated beside each other, hand clasped in hand. Juliette was talking now, telling the tale of her grief and her despair. She was smiling as she recalled all her sufferings, and it was now Laurier's turn to weep.

"My friends," said Davidoff, "we have kept the promises that we made you: you are happy. That is well, but we must not abuse our good fortune. Mlle. de Vignes is not so strong yet that she can be allowed to take her pleasures except in small doses, so that will answer for one session. Besides, you will have plenty of opportunities to meet again."

Then Juliette made use of all her blandishments to persuade her mother to let them have another quarter of an hour, and Mme. de Vignes could not find it in her heart to cast a shadow on the pretty face that now wore a smile for the first time in so long a while. She felt assured now that youth was about to be victorious over death, which such a little time ago was dragging it downward toward

the grave, and the bitter feeling that she had experienced against Pierre Laurier as the involuntary author of all these woes was at once dissipated by the change which his presence had effected in Juliette's condition. So they remained, all four of them, oblivious to the flight of time, listening to Pierre's story of life in the little Corsican village. Juliette could not help loving Agostino, Marietta, the old mother and the good curé, and the promise that Pierre had made to return and visit his friends in Torrevecchio she, also, with a burst of grateful feeling, mentally confirmed. It was midnight before they separated.

"You will not see us to-morrow," Davidoff said to his patient, with a smile. Then as he saw a cloud pass over her face, he added: "You must consider others as well as yourself, my child. We have another case to look after that will prove more serious and more difficult to treat even than your own. We must start for Trouville early in the morning to see what we can do for your brother."

The selfishness with which the girl's happiness was alloyed instantly vanished. The consciousness returned to her of the distressing situation in which she and her mother were placed, and her strong good sense immediately resumed its authority over her. She shook hands with Davidoff, and addressing Pierre: "You are right," she said. "Go, both of you, and endeavor to do for my brother what you have so well done for me. Your success can not make me more grateful, but it will add to my happiness." Then, taking the hand of him whom she loved, she led him to her mother. Mme. de Vignes opened her arms to the prodigal son, and together with her kiss Pierre felt that he was receiving absolution for all his sins.

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VII.

THERE was high carnival that morning at Clémence's, where a great breakfast was going on. It was the commencement of race-week, and there had been a great influx of people from Paris the day before whom Jacques and his pretty mistress had met that evening at the Casino and invited to their house. They were the very cream of the cream of the gay world, the gentlemen the elect of the most stylish and pleasure-loving set and the women selected from among the number of the brightest and most seductive of their sisterhood. The men all bore names that were illustrious in art, finance and politics; the ladies were among the most renowned of the leaders of the battalion of Cythera. There were Prince Patrizzi, Duverney, the great artist of the nude, still preserving the gayety of the days when he was a painter's apprentice, little Baron Trésorier the stock-broker, reputed to be one of the best swordsmen of the fencing-schools of Paris, Berneville, a sporting man, who rides like a professional jockey and has broken his collar-bone seven times over the hurdles, the duc de Faucigny, the youngest deputy of the Chamber, a red-hot legitimist and who created such a sensation by his adhesion to Don Carlos, Burat, the accredited lawyer of the theatres, the sharpest among all the sharp tongues of the lawyers who frequent the Palais, an assiduous attendant of first nights and a passionate collector of pictures, and finally Selim Nuño, who was there to watch the running of his mare Mandragora in the handi-

cap sweepstakes, concealing his anxiety as a breeder under a mask of affected liveliness.

The women were Andrée de Taillebourg, Mariette de Fontenoy, Laure d' Évreux and Sophie Viroflay, all bearing names borrowed from the most glorious battle-fields of French history or from the best known of the stations in the railway guides. All of them, men and women, it is unnecessary to say, were jolly and generous, pretty and dressed to kill.

The ball was to be kept rolling all day long. Breakfast with Clémence in the morning, after which Nuño's four-in-hand was to convey the whole party to the races, then everybody would go home to freshen up their toilette a little and at half-past seven they would reassemble at the Roches-Noires, where Baron Trésorier would give the joyous band a good dinner. Then to the Casino, the whole company, for a few turns of the waltz. What was to come after that was an unknown quantity, and this was likely to occupy an important space in the programme with these men who exhibited so much inventive genius in their pleasures and these women who yielded so readily to caprice.

" My children," said Duverney, " we are about to commence the day together, and we will end it in the same way. Only it is not certain that the women won't change cavaliers, as they do in the figure of the quadrille! "

" Tell me, you impolite man," cried Laure d'Évreux, " why do you accord the privilege of unfaithfulness to women?"

" Because it is a professional necessity with them !"

" Great heavens! You don't mean to insinuate that

they are venal?" interjected Faucigny with a scandalized air.

"There are men who say as much!" replied Trésorier.

"That must be because settling-day has had a bad effect on their nerves," Clémence said with a laugh.

Every eye was instantly directed upon Jacques, who was walking in the garden engaged in conversation with Patrizzi. There was so much meaning in the movement that Clémence made a gesture of denial. "No, no," she said, "I am not speaking of Jacques. He has made quite a specialty of breaking the bank at the club for the past two days. Yesterday he brought home three thousand louis in his pocket. He is having a run of luck; he says that everything is bound to succeed with him." Here she turned to Nuño, who was buried in an easy-chair, and mischievously added: "And so he is offering ten to one on the field against Mandragora to all takers."

Nuño's face was purple with wrath as he struggled to his feet. "I will take more of that than he will feel like giving," he cried. "My mare is a sure winner."

"But are you sure of your jockey?" asked Berneville. "You know that Chapwal pulled La Bonnerie's horse at Caen the other day?"

"That don't trouble me. Petersen can't make so much by losing the race as I shall pay him if I win."

"But your promises to Petersen, my poor Nuño," said Andrée de Taillebourg, "won't give legs to Mandragora."

"The mare is in first-rate condition," rejoined the banker.

"*Ouich!* I wouldn't put a pinch of snuff on her!"

"I will back her even against the field!" the big man angrily exclaimed.

"Nuño, you will make yourself sick," said Sophie Viroflay. "It is exceedingly imprudent to let your anger get the better of you before breakfast."

"It is just as bad as being too loving after breakfast," put in Mariette de Fontenoy.

"Trust to the experience of these ladies," said Burat, "and beware of apoplexy with your dessert!"

"If you die before your time," the pretty blonde rejoined, "it will surely be because you have bitten your own tongue and the venom has penetrated your system."

"Oh! Fontenoy, you are not so generous as our ancestors were at the battle that bears your name; you do not say, Gentlemen, fire first."

"I never say that until after midnight."

"But then, what a nice way you have of saying it!"

"You don't know anything about it, any way!"

"But I have been told."

"By whom, pray?"

"*Pardi!* by all the world!"

"Insolent!"

Mariette, amid the laughter of the applauding company, threw herself upon the lawyer, and laughing and scolding at the same time, her face blazing, gave him a sound beating with her fan, her gold bracelets rattling at every stroke. He ran through the apartment, shielding his head with his hands as well as he could, pursued by his fair enemy, whose dress of pink cambric trimmed with Valenciennes, fluttering in the ardor of the chase, offered glimpses of two little feet in gold slippers and a pair of well-turned ankles in open-work stockings. She stopped, breathless, in front of Burat, who had thrown himself

upon his knees in token of submission, and showing him her ruined fan, said: "You will buy me another one to pay for this."

"Yes, my dear, and I will have it decorated with paintings of orange flowers."

"So you are going to begin it again?"

"Come, come! be quiet," Clémence interrupted. "Breakfast is nearly ready."

Jacques and Patrizzi came in. The air was of a delicious temperature and the roses in the garden were giving

forth their sweetest perfume. The doors of the dining-room were thrown open, and the butler, white-cravated and solemn as if he had been on duty before an assemblage of duchesses, announced:

"Madame is served."

Clémence took Faucigny's arm, Jacques offered his to Sophie Viroflay, and the procession of men and women left the drawing-room.

The dining-room, a magnificent apartment with hangings of Chinese silk and furniture of carved iron-wood, opened on the one side upon the conservatory and on the other upon the gardens. Three wide bay-windows, filled with painted glass picturing odd flowers and fantastic birds, gave access to a terrace, in the centre of which a monumental flight of steps descended toward the lawn and its ornamental flower-beds. These three windows, which were left wide open that morning, allowed the light and air to enter the room in floods. The turf of the garden was of an emerald green, and the sand of the pathways, shining white in the sunlight, reflected the gentle warmth. In the distance the blue of the sky was shaded with tints of violet. Outside all was silence, warmth and joy. Clémence's guests, unconsciously imbued with these delightful influences, yielded themselves to the joy that nature was exhaling from her inanimate objects. Heads grew hot, nerves were more tightly strung and the gayety began to change to riot.

Amid all this tumultuous merriment Jacques alone remained serious, as if there were some secret remorse gnawing at his heart. Freed for the time being from his pecuniary necessities, he was thinking of those whom he had wronged so grievously in order to procure

himself his last resources. Seated among his bright and laughing guests, surrounded by beautiful and seductive women, he was possessed by the gloomiest reflections. He cast a look upon the brilliant table, loaded with flowers, silver and crystal; he glanced at those who were seated by it, and he beheld them careless and happy. He alone was consuming with the bitterness of an ill-spent life. All the others were free of mind and heart; he listened to their laughter and gay talk; every day it was thus for them, every day the same fête, the same enjoyment. Every day for him, likewise, the same unending torture, the same anguish that he could do nothing to appease.

His eyes were attracted to Clémence and Faucigny, who were conversing in low tones directly opposite to him. He could not distinguish their words, but he divined their meaning. The duke, persuasive and insinuating, was making love to the pretty girl, and she was listening to him with a smiling face. He well knew what that smile portended; it would be with Faucigny as it had been with so many others. Jacques' face contracted with a spasm of anguish. One after another he drained several glasses of wine of different kinds, and a red flush mounted to his cheeks. A wave of anger swept through his mind; he thought: "I am surly, that is the reason why Clémence turns from me. Is it not right that she should be the instrument to punish me, for whose sake I have committed so many infamous actions?"

He heard some one calling him. It was Patrizzi, shouting to him from the other end of the table: "Say, Jacques, does not this breakfast remind you of our dinner at Monte Carlo? Some of these gentlemen, and

almost all these ladies, were there. We were not so gay that night, though, as we are to-day....And what diabolical stories! Do you remember them?"

"How is it that that Russian doctor who is travelling with Woreseff is not here?" inquired Andrée de Taillebourg.

"He has been in Paris for the last five days," Patrizzi replied.

At these words Jacques saw Juliette's pale, sad face arise before him. She was sitting in the drawing-room where he had passed so many evenings while he was still an obedient son and a loving brother. Mme. de Vignes was bending anxiously over her daughter, and Davidoff stood near, regarding them both with an expression of compassion on his face. It seemed to the young man that his mother had uttered his name and that the doctor had answered with a sorrowful nod of the head. Was it not his place to have been at the side of those two women? Why was this stranger consoling his mother and his sister? A low voice murmured in his ear: "It is because you refused to do your duty, because you preferred the gaming-table to your mother, a mistress to your sister, because you are a scoundrel and an ingrate!"

He burst into a fit of frightful, inexplicable laughter, that drew upon him the attention of all the company. They beheld him pale as death, his lips drawn in a ghastly smile, his eyes glittering.

"Yes, yes!" he cried, regardless of their amazement, "the dinner at Monte Carlo was not so gay as our breakfast this morning. I was at the point of death, in the first place, and to-day I am well and strong. Oh yes! well and strong, thanks to Davidoff, who gave us an admirable

lecture on the transmission of souls. You haven't forgotten it, Patrizzi?... nor you, Trésorier? He told us a story about a young Russian girl.... Oh, such a jolly good story!... and what a chap to mystify one that Davidoff is! Not one of us took his story in earnest—not even you, Patrizzi, who are a Neapolitan and consequently superstitious. You believe in the evil-eye, don't you, Prince?"

"Do not make light of those things," said Patrizzi, who suddenly became grave and made a rapid sign behind his back with two fingers of his left hand.

"Ah! ah! ah!" sneered Jacques, "did you see what the Prince did? He conjured away his bad luck; he believes in the jettatura. And yet he did not put any faith in Davidoff's demonstrations.... No one believed in them, ... not a soul... excepting Pierre Laurier.... But then everybody knows that tne poor fellow had gone mad!"

These strange words were succeeded by a silence as of death; the blood of every one present ran cold in his veins. It seemed to them as if the ghost of him whom they had known and esteemed and loved must arise and appear before them. The men glanced at one another doubtfully, not knowing what to think of this sudden frenzy that had thrown a pall over their banquet, which had had such a joyous beginning, while the women, unaware of what was going on, commenced to laugh. Clémence bit her pale lips with anger and rapped sharply upon the table with her knife, and her crystal wine-glass fell broken to the floor, with a silvery sound.

"A glass broken!" exclaimed Laure d'Évreux, "that's a sign of bad luck!"

"This is perfectly ridiculous, Jacques," Clémence cried

in a voice that shook with anger. "Did our friends come here to listen to such follies?"

"Friend Jacques is drunk!" exclaimed Sophie Viroflay. "It is only half-past twelve—rather early in the day for that!"

"I am not drunk!" screamed the young man, whose face assumed a frightful expression. "I was never more sober in my life!... I said to you that Laurier was mad. Is there one of you who doubts it? Is there a single one among you all who witnessed how he spent his last months of life, who were spectators of his torments, his despair, his moral agony—is there a single one who can look me in the face and say that I do not tell the truth? You are silent! Even Clémence has nothing to say... and the reason is that she knows very well that Laurier was mad and why he was mad!"

The face of the actress who was apostrophized in this manner took on a yellowish tinge, as if the blood in her veins had been converted into gall, the cords of her neck became tense and swollen, and with a voice that hissed with rage she screamed: "You make us regret him! I wish that he were in your place and you in his!"

"Have patience! I shall soon be there," said Jacques with a frightful smile, "for I am leading the same infernal life that ended in suicide in his case. I know what his sufferings were, for I am passing through them, and I can understand how it was that he could not endure, them for long. We were just now speaking of Doctor Davidoff and recalling the strange stories that he told us one fine night. You remember, Patrizzi, how Laurier, after listening to them in silence, suddenly broke out and said: 'Jacques, if ever I become tired of life, I will be-

queath my soul to you.' Yes, I know you have not forgotten it.... Well; before that very same night had passed over our heads he was dead, and I, who was at the last gasp, was returning to health. A few days after that, Prince, you met me at Nice at the masked ball and said to me in jest: 'So you have got a brand-new soul, that of your friend Laurier?' You did not know how truly you were speaking: that soul was then inhabiting my body. I could feel it burning within me, with all its passions, those same passions that had brought ruin and destruction to wretched Pierre. The mad desire of unbounded pleasure, an unreasoning passion, the intoxication of gambling for unlimited stakes seized me and consumed me in their feverish attractions.... Then a woman came into my life, drawing me to her, fatally, invincibly. She could not but attract me, for I bore within me Pierre's soul, still filled with the desire of her who was at my side, tempting and alluring me.... Oh! I had a glimmer of reason; at that moment I caught a glimpse of what my destiny must be and I endeavored to resist, but the sorceress of love held me firmly down and I was no longer myself. All my nature arose in ferment and dragged me toward her. I obeyed her as a dog obeys his master. She had but to raise her finger and I ran to her, after having sworn that I would return to her no more. Thus little by little did I descend the slope that conducted Pierre Laurier to destruction; like him I gambled because I had to have money, money without end, like him I was oblivious of everything except the perverted creature who was the object of my adoration. He made sacrifice of his talent and his reputation. I was wanting to my dearest affections. I robbed my mother, abandoned my

sister. He was dastard and abject, so was I! He submitted to the faithlessness of his mistress and gave the hand of friendship to his rivals.... At this very moment, all of you who are seated about this table, every one of you who are now listening to my words, either have been or are the lovers of the woman whom I call mine. Yes, you, Nuño, who have been deceived and have revenged yourself by deceiving your successors; you, Burat, who have defended the suits that her clamorous tradesmen have brought against her; you, Trésorier, who have caused to multiply manifold by judicious investment the sums paid her by Berneville and Patrizzi;... and you Duverney, the clown whose duty it was to divert the fair one in her melancholy moods, and finally you, Faucigny, the last to win her favor. Well, my friends, do you believe now that I am sober and that I know what I am talking about?"

He had risen to his feet and was standing erect. His lips were fringed with a slight froth, his hands trembled and his laugh was harsh and forced. He held forth his goblet full of champagne and said: "I am your host.... I drink to you all, lovers of my mistress! And I drink to the absent... to Pierre Laurier!"

He raised the glass to his lips, but did not drink. His look, directed toward the terrace, became staring and expressed the deepest horror; he uttered a hoarse cry and recoiled a step. He had perceived him whose name he had invoked, Pierre Laurier, ascending the steps of the terrace in company with Davidoff. Stupefied, breathless, the moisture standing in great drops upon his forehead, he watched him with devouring eyes as he came forward.

When the two men came within the door-way and stopped he made a wild gesture, as if to exorcise some terrible apparition, raised his hand to his throat like a man

who feels himself strangling, and cried in hollow tones: "Pierre, Pierre, what would you have? You know that there is not room for us two upon the earth... if you live, I must die!"

"Jacques!" exclaimed Laurier, approaching him with outstretched hands.

The latter made an effort to repulse him, but he suddenly turned deathly pale and with a frightful rattling in his throat fell back lifeless into his friend's arms.

"He is dead!" said Berneville. "We must send for..."

"Let no one stir," said Davidoff. "He is not dead and there is no need of sending for any one."

He poured some water in a glass and sprinkled the wretched man's temples with it; he heaved a deep sigh.

His friends had risen and grouped themselves tumultuously about him; Clémence was the first to recover her self-possession. "What do you propose to do?" she asked Davidoff.

"I propose to remove M. de Vignes," said the Russian.

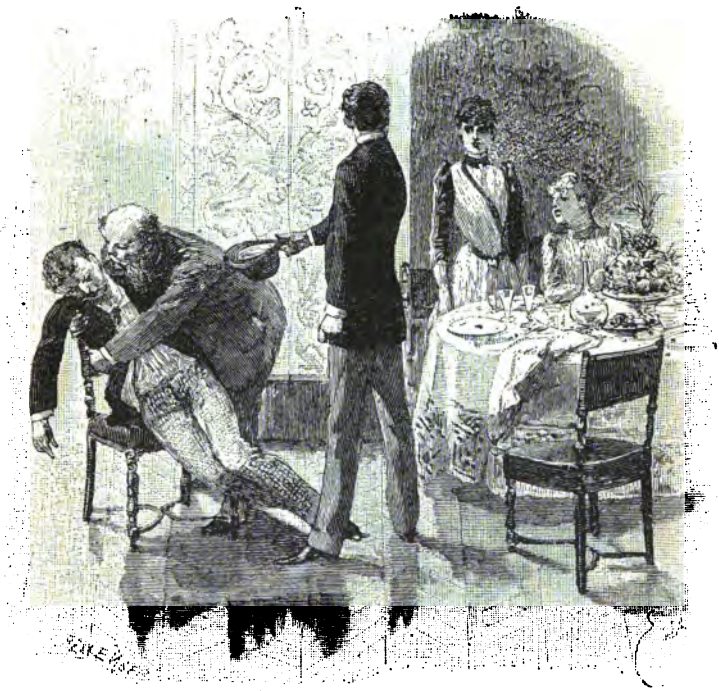
Pierre came forward a step, and placing himself in front of Clémence: "Do you intend to offer any opposition?" he coldly asked.

The woman tried to carry it off with an assumption of boldness; she raised her eyes to the face of him who had questioned her. He met her look calmly; his countenance was contemptuously indifferent, but bore an expression of melancholy. He was again the Pierre Laurier of the days of their early love, with his proud, inspired face, his manly bearing and a gentle sadness in his voice that moved Clémence to the depths of her soul. She would have chosen to address him with her habitual insolence, but a sudden feeling of humility conquered her and softened her heart. She gave the young man a timid smile and approaching, said: "Is it prudent to take him away in the condition that he is in? Come with me; I will give

you a room where he can be cared for in perfect quietness."

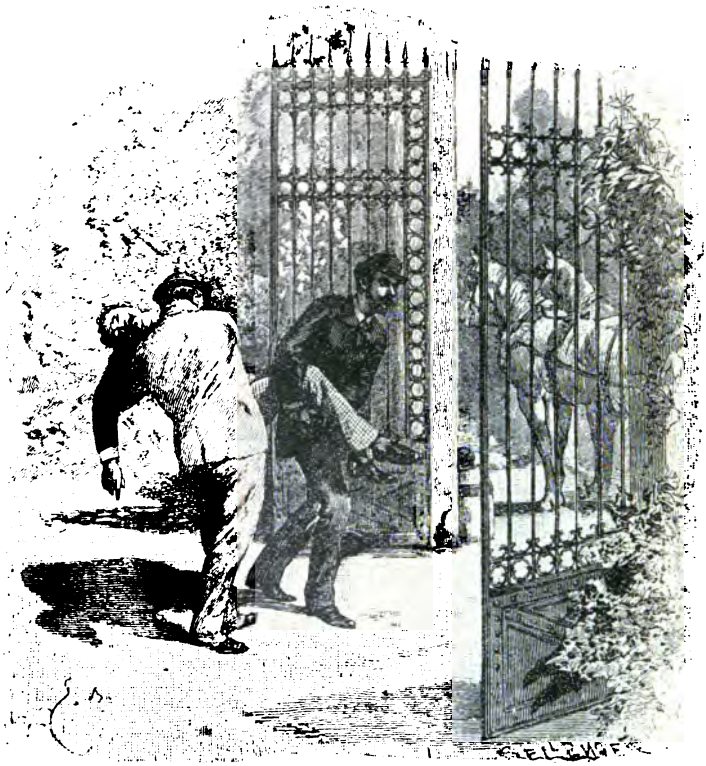
"It is useless," replied Pierre. "None of us will remain in your house a single moment longer."

"Why?" said Clémence. "Are we not friends?"



Laurier pointed to Jacques, painfully gasping for breath in Davidoff's arms, and his answer was gentle, but immovably firm: "I have forgiven you the wrong that you did me; I will never forgive you the evil that you have inflicted on him. Adieu."

Davidoff and Pierre raised Jacques, who had not regained consciousness, and carried him as if he had been a little child through the garden to the carriage that had



brought them from the station. They were scarcely out of sight when the constraint that had fallen upon the assemblage vanished.

"Ah! my children," Burat exclaimed, "what an ending for a breakfast!"

"I am glad that they took him away," said Mariette de Fontenoy, "he was getting tiresome! I can't endure people who make scenes at table!"

"It seems to me, do you know, Clémence," said Duverney, "that the men who kill themselves for love of you make pretty lively corpses!"

Clémence had been silent for a while, reflecting, with head bent upon her breast. She suddenly aroused herself and looking at her guests, exclaimed: "Well! you may say what you choose about Pierre Laurier, but I tell you that there is not one among the whole pack of you that can begin to hold a candle to that man!... Come, it is nearly two o'clock. Let us go to the track and see Selim's horse come in a good last!"

* * * * * *

Pierre and Juliette had been married three months, and the young woman had recovered her health and beauty. Pierre was overrun with orders, and worked as long as day-light lasted and passed all his evenings at home with his mother and brother-in-law. Jacques was sinking, slowly but surely, to the grave. He was entirely cured of his dangerous madness and had again become the gentle and affectionate son and brother that he was of old. It seemed to be his heartfelt desire to make those who were about him forget the sufferings that he had inflicted on them, and not once since that day when his friends had brought him home to his mother had he been heard to give utterance to a complaint. It was as if he were welcoming pain and death as an atonement for his sins.

He was much wasted, his eyes were sunken, and his hair nearly white; there remained scarcely a trace of the

good looks that had turned so many heads. The young man was grown prematurely old. He hardly ever left

his easy-chair; his legs covered with a plaid, he would sit for hours dreamily reflecting by the window, watching with a listless air the people hurrying along the streets.

He would not even ride out with his mother to get a breath of fresh air in the Bois. He would answer her invitation with a smile and say: "One must have a little

pride and not show himself so weak and miserable to those who knew him when he was young and strong. Go, dear mother, without me; you can tell me what you see, and

in that way I shall have the pleasure without the fatigue."

His sad face was never brightened by a gleam of joy except when his sister came to see him. He could not do without her, and excused himself for taking her so selfishly away from her husband: "He can afford to forgive me; there is so little time left me to see you, while he has all a lifetime."

One day he said to her: "Do you remember the terrace at Beaulieu, Juliette, and the conversation that we had there?"

The young woman shuddered at the horror of this remembrance. She would have interrupted her brother and prevented him from calling up the memory of those mournful days, but he showed unwonted energy and carried his point.

"The remorse that I feel is so bitter, you see, that I must free my mind. I think of it all night long as I lie in bed, unable to sleep. It is a poison that is slowly eating away my heart. You were so innocent and gentle, and I did you such a fearful wrong.... Oh! I shall never rest until I know that I have your pardon!"

"But what have you to reproach yourself with, my poor brother? We had the same griefs to bear in common, and we shed our tears together."

"No, our griefs were not in common," said Jacques in a low voice, "for my sorrow was hypocritical. I believed that I was living Pierre's life, and I did not regret his death. It is a horrible thing that I am telling you, but the truth must be revealed. I felt certain that your sorrow would cost you your life, and all that I felt was a concealed irritation at that sorrow, which seemed to me to be a reflec-

tion upon my joy. Yes, I was such a monster that I welcomed the thought that Pierre was dead and that you also would die. What was all this affliction and death to me, compared with the certainty of my renewed existence? That was the question that I dared ask myself. Truly man is nothing but a miserable, abject brute!" His cheeks were blazing and he struggled for breath as he proceeded. "So, between your life and mine, I did not hesitate; I was ready to sacrifice yours, and in place of mourning for the friend who was gone, I rejoiced that I had survived in his place.... I had an attack of madness in those days, my dear sister.... Davidoff, in order to effect my cure, had recourse to a fearful experiment; he wished to ascertain the power of mind over matter, of the will over the body; he endeavored to produce material results through the action of my confidence. Unfortunately, alas! his trial was made upon a weak mind, an impressionable imagination; it was only too successful. Like the miracle-workers of other days who used to convert the multitude into fanatics, he said to me: 'You are healed; you have a new life within you; live, therefore,' and my need of believing was so great that I believed. But how my mind was deteriorated, how my character was debased by that belief! I had been kind and gentle; I became hard and selfish... and in order to forget, to silence the voice of conscience, I threw myself headlong into debauchery, I abandoned myself to vice. The metamorphosis was so great that it seemed to me that I must be leading a dual existence; there was within me a physical being which acted in obedience to the impulses of a raging madness and an intelligent, sane being, that lamented these excesses and protested against them. For

nearly a year I lived the life of a criminal who bears within himself the consciousness of his crimes and accuses and convicts himself even as he perpetrated them. Such was existence for me... and to lengthen out my days in this hell it seemed right and natural that Laurier should have departed for eternity and that you should go to join him there. But a just God has interposed, and Pierre and you will live, and it will be I who shall die."

"Jacques!" interrupted the young woman, bending over her brother's hand, which she moistened with her tears.

The death-stricken man regained his breath with an effort and said, with the solemnity of one making a last request: "Tell me that you forgive me, and that when I shall be with you no longer you will retain a little pity and tenderness for my memory."

"Oh! yes, I forgive you, since you require me to utter those useless words, and I claim no merit for them, for I love you."

Jacques smiled faintly. "There can be no doubt," he said, "that women are better than we."

"But you will not die, dear Jacques."

He shook his head, and with a thought of his wasted youth and ruined health, made answer: "What is the use?" Then his expression changed, and he added with tender cheerfulness: "Besides, it is no longer possible, for you, now, have Pierre's soul."

Six weeks later, just as autumn was ending and the trees were losing their last leaves, the entire family took their departure for the south. They again beheld with mournful pleasure the villa of Beaulieu, the forests of pines, thujas and junipers and the bay with its reefs of

red rocks upon which the waves broke with gentle murmurs. Jacques at first appeared to rally in the animating sunshine, but he soon declined again to his former state

of gloomy weakness, and one night, surrounded by all those to whom he was dear, he peacefully passed away.

He sleeps upon the hill-side in the shade of the orange trees, lulled by the whispering of the perfumed breeze, and on the stone above his grave are these words:

JACQUES DE VIGNES.

God has taken to Himself his poor suffering soul.

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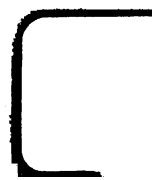
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